

First You Dream, Then You Die, 101

"The Cord of Communion"

NOTES

So the pilot's title refers to Cornell Woolrich, a writer whose life mirrored Norman Bates's in some oddly key ways and whose biographer (whose book bore the same title) has said, "He did in prose what Hitchcock did in film." He was gay, alcoholic, lived on and off with his mother, did well in the movie-option department and seemed like an all-around total genius I would never have otherwise heard of or enjoyed so much as I have in the past few weeks since first googling this phrase.

I think it's more than a wink at the extensive and multivalent connections between Cornell, Norman and Alfred H (and Anthony P), though. As the show itself drifts in its various layers of reference, reversion, reverence and retelling, picking and choosing from things on every layer in order to tell the story it wants to tell, it makes total sense to quote a man whose work influenced Hitchcock and yet who seemed to himself be a Hitchcock character. In fact *Rear Window* was based on a story of his which -- layer-violating once again -- was a remake of an H.G. Wells short story and so on.

All of which is to say: This is the world we are looking at, a world that pulls equally from all time and cinematic history, from disparate levels of mimesis and simulacrum, biography to fantasy to all and sundry refilmed-remade-rebooted-retellings, equally. The ultimate postmodern (in the actual sense of the term) spin-out and remix of a story that has proven widely and wildly remixable. Over the past week, I've learned that any review of this show that opens with bitching about iPhones is not going to be worth reading, because it has no idea what it's looking at.

This is *not even the first Norman Bates story with iPods*, for chrissake. A thing I can't remember anybody bringing up all week long. But while Gus van Sant was practicing creative restraint and this is a show is about externalizing the duality of self, one must wonder - why is *this* the story, why are we continually returning to this particular thing to work out our zeitgeisty-artsy obsessions? When in ten years they develop, I don't know, Smell-O-Vision or four-dimensional timespace dramas or liquid downloadable drinkable movies, there will be a Norman Bates story within the first six months. I guarantee it. Do I really need to tell you why?

It's the soup of culture surrounding *the oldest story in history and the oldest fear at the heart of humans*. Does the mother overtake the son? Does the son overtake the mother? Male privilege will tell you that the world is about son overtaking father, becoming father, displacing father -- until he's old enough to become one. But that's a story with a beginning and middle and end: This is a story that surrounds you so much you can't even talk about it. You can talk about "legitimate rape" and birth control rights and bake sexism right into the cake, but you can't talk about it. Unless you do it like this: Horribly, horrifically, sadly and deliriously.

And the other thing, too: An Oedipal story about fathers and sons doesn't have women in it. It has objects with vaginas, but no women. But properly, a story about this stuff would put the woman at the center of it all. We like to pretend that for every Oedipus there's an Electra, that men and women are absolutely interchangeable and that one day we'll all be gender fluid otherkin in bunny ears having demiromantic cuddle parties on Google+ and calling it feminism, but that's bullshit, too.

The truth is that men are born from women... *and so are women*. And so while a boy vs. daddy story is a good story -- the only story men seem interested in telling, to this point in history -- the truth is that a me vs. mother story is *universal*. And anybody who tells you that's untrue or gay is caught in a story about *men*, not *people*. But men aren't the only ones telling stories anymore.

It's so dangerous we don't even really go there and when we do it's like this: Insanity, generation-blending, sexual danger, gender-confusion that's so confused it needs itself explanation and yes, postmodern remix of old and new and versions within versions, commenting on versions of versions, presenting all at once in whatever way these particular folks feel will tell the best particular story. Which is all it's called on to do or to be: A story that uses color and style, sex and love, torture and light to tell you 1) a dream that will 2) end in death.

HIS GIRL FRIDAY

Cary Grant: "All she ever wanted was a home."

Ex-GF's New Fiancé: "Well, I'll certainly try to give her one..."

Cary Grant: "Are you gonna live with your mother?"

Fiancé: "Just for the first year!"

Norman wakes up -- after how long? -- and heads out, stumbling, into the hallway. It's only when his momentum slams him face-to-face with his parents' wedding photo that he rouses, gets a terrible feeling and runs through the house. Everything is on pause: The iron's dripping with steam, dinner's boiling over, everything is crazy and silent. Out in the garage the blood's still wet.

Norman runs back down the halls, bashing into doors, and when his mother finally comes to the door she looks tired, interrupted; she fastens her robe and wonders why on Earth he's so upset *now*. When she follows to find Norman cradling his father's dead body, she searches his face for shame or fear, but there's none. Only misery. She takes him to her, wrapped in her robe and rocks him as he grieves. "I'm so sorry," she says. He was her best thing and he's broken.

SIX MONTHS LATER

Heading up a seaside highway, lush and green and perfect. The thing about a narcissist, about a lot of people actually, is that it's hard to tell where you end and somebody else begins. When you have to talk louder than anybody else just to be heard -- when you're a woman like Norma Bates -- it's sometimes easier to just demand that the world put itself in order. She's not wrong. But sometimes, say, she'll put words in his mouth. It's a fun game -- her words, coming out of his mouth. For now, that's fun.

Norma: "This is the part where you say *Mother, this is beautiful. I'm so happy we're moving here. You are so smart to have thought of this.*"

Norman: "*Mother, this is so beautiful. I'm so happy you're [making me move] here. You're so smart to [force me to do things I have no say in].*"

She laughs at him, she likes his spirit. She parks their old wagon and tells him to close his eyes. When he opens them, she's arranged on the hood of the car, laid out like a supermodel; blooming over her, filling his vision, is a motel. Eight rooms, it looks like, arranged all along a parallel. And behind the building -- you've seen it, you know what it looks like -- is a house as big as the sky.

Norman gets worried -- this isn't the first of her big ideas. But it might be the biggest. All she ever wanted was a home.

Norma: "Oh, it's not crazy, it's not! We own a motel, Norman Bates."

It was a foreclosure, so it's fully furnished. Plastic on everything, but it's there. A little old world, full of little old things. There's been so much said about the style, but it really is something: A dusty sad place, new life bursting up through the cracks of somebody else's dead dream. We're only borrowing this life. You think you own a place in the world, but you don't. Not really. It belongs to the men. She got this because one of them made a mistake and the other dogs circled and barked and threw him out. That's the only way you can, by exploiting some other fool who did it wrong. The world doesn't just hand you things.

But this world, now is like a lake in the middle of a concrete world. The motel to sustain them and the house to call their own. Her name, a woman's name, on the papers. Out there, a man's world; in here, Norma's. And down the hill a bit, little cages to keep them in, when they visit. It's the perfect economy: A world away from men, who only visit to give her money. Like having a million husbands to clean and cook for, but they don't come in the house -- into this holy place -- and they eventually leave. And Norman remains.

His bedroom is, of course, next door to hers. He knows partially that this is about him, something about him -- he was sick or did something. But she casts it as grief and then she casts even that off: This is about new beginnings, plain and simple. His father is dead and his brother might as well be, but those were just mistakes. This is the thing that was meant to be. This is what they built. All she ever wanted was a home.

Norman: "Maybe some people don't get to start over, maybe they just bring themselves to a new place."

Norma: "You say that a lot, and less than you think it. You think I'm impulsive and irresponsible, because you don't see the way I have to take apart and put this world back together every time it invades, with my hands. But you will. You'll understand what it's like out there and why we need this place to be safe. But until then I will describe it another way. People *do* get do-overs, sometimes. But they have to *try*."

Norman: "Yeah?"

You have no idea how hard they have to try. You will: The world is torture.

FIRST DAY

He's listening to classical at the bus stop, he's got some ideas about himself and what people do. How to live. A girl from the tortured world sees him and jumps, seizing on him: There is something there, isn't there. Some kind of innocence or a... he's untouched. Still new. But he's not soft, either. He's not shy. There's a difference between quiet and shy. She can see that too.

She drags the girls along with her -- nameless for now -- to question him. There should be three, classically there would be three, but there have to be four, for reasons we'll see in a second.

What is the boy's name? *Norman Bates*. When did Norman Bates move here? *Last night*. Where? What house? *This house; the motel*. So you bought the motel? To live or to flip? *We're not flipping*, he says, with conviction. Not this time. Does he have brothers? *Just Dylan, just the half-blood mistake. But not here*.

Norman: "It's just me and my mom."

Girl: "Got a girlfriend?"

Norman: "What did I just say?"

Another one rolls up in a brand-new car and they squeal. He smiles, content to let them leave with her. There's a lot to look at. But they can't let him go or leave him behind. There's something about him. Like a little toy. Like a man you could keep as a pet, safe behind the locks. She ushers him into the back of the convertible and climbs onto him: Four girls, three seats, one Norman. We don't even know we're doing it, half the time.

She takes his phone and snaps a practiced selfie for her contact info: "Bradley Martin. You have any questions at school, you call me. Okay?" He can tell she means it. She means what she says. Does she have a boyfriend? Yes, more than likely. Does that rule her out? Not really, but she's not offering. A dumber, a shittier, a more obsolete boy would call it the Friend Zone, but he wasn't raised here in the tortured concrete world. He knows the score.

BACK HOME

Dylan: "Thanks for letting me know you moved, *Mom*."

Norma: "Pretty sure the last time we spoke, you told me to *Drop dead, bitch*. Sorry I took it personally."

Dylan: "So your own son doesn't get to know? What if I was hurt? What if I was in the hospital? What if I needed you?"

Norma: "Are you those things?"

Dylan: "No, I just need money."

Norma: "Later. *Click*."

Click.

ENGLISH

He looks at Bradley all through class: This girl who navigates the concrete world like she was born to it, like it doesn't hurt her at all. Norma wouldn't like her. Would like even less Miss Watson, with her fire-bright hair and lipstick talking about poetry and time.

Miss Watson: "I want you to just think about poetry tonight. What does it mean? Why is it timeless? Why is there power in words arranged in cadences and structures?"

Rules for the concrete world, words. The way they tell you what to do, how to be, what a man is and a woman. Poetry takes this and twists it, bends it, breaks it and puts it back in the shape of something else. Brings it into the house on the hill, and when it comes back out again it sounds like a dream. There's a fluorescent light up there in the attic; you never know when it's going to flicker into light and show you

what you've made. What you can show the world of torture, what you made in the world beneath those waves. The fire you stole.

MISS WATSON ADVISES

Miss Watson: "Norman, your test scores are amazing. But your grades..."

Norman: "We move a lot. Five different high schools. My mom's impulsive, she gets these ideas and we move and everything is new. Which is *good*."

Miss Watson: "Wings are good. But so are roots. I want you to think about joining something."

Norman: "Not sports. Not the world of men."

Miss Watson: "What about a sport that isn't? What about track? Ever run?"

Norman: "Not as a sport, no."

Miss Watson: "Listen, I realize I'm going to have to go the extra mile here, so I'm gonna tell Coach Carpenter you'll try out. Is that okay?"

Bradley Martin lives in the concrete world, but she moves. Miss Watson looks at him, at the length of his body and calls him a runner, so he can try that. He can see what the world is like. Miss Watson watches him thinking. (Miss Watson, of all the Canadian actors here, is the most memorable to me: She played the most important and my second-favorite, member of a certain cult aboard the *Galactica*.)

Miss Watson: "Norman, I see that you lost your dad recently. I know how hard that must be. So please know that you can come to me if you have any issues or questions -- about *anything* -- because I'm here for *you*. Okay?"

In the moment that she touches his hand, looks at his body, tries to replace Norma, he can hear it. It doesn't speak in words yet, but he can hear it. He runs. Not as a sport, not as a game: It's concrete.

AFTER SCHOOL

Norma's in a quiet mood. Sitting at the table, dinner covered over in tinfoil, waiting for him. He knows the answer for this one: The biggest smile, the biggest needs. The hunger to be nurtured.

Norman: "Wow. Dinner smells *great*, Mom!"

Norma: "I've been waiting. Alone, in this house. Making it beautiful. Making a home."

Norman: "I was late because I was trying out for track team. It was Miss Watson's idea..."

Norma: "The hell is that? Is she pretty?"

Norman: "-- I got on the team, if you sign this permission slip I can..."

Norma: "Practice every day after school, track meets on Saturdays... you realize we just bought a hotel? A world?"

He knows this one, too and tries to jerk the slip back out of her hands, smiling hugely, apologetically: Not a problem, forget it happened. Forget this, turn off the light, let's have dinner.

Norma: "No! I'm not gonna... be the mother who tells her kid he can't be on the track team. It's fine, it's okay. I'll just do everything myself. The way I always do..."

It's unsubtle enough that he jerks around, tries again for the slip, begs her to sit down and eat dinner: He didn't think this one through, it was just an idea. Wings are good. Home is better. He already has the roots he needs. But she's made the point; she's poisoned it for him, forever. She signs the slip, loose and bristling now and heads out angrily for groceries. Ashamed and cornered at the table as she vanishes, he shouts her name; her name is Mother.

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NEXT DAY

Norman's beating rugs outside when the guy shows up: A dirtier, stupider Vincent D'Onofrio. The guy's drunk, but not moving slow. He's a man, walking right up to the edge of safety. Norman shivers.

Summers: "You're Norman, right? Just moved in, right? With your mother?"

Norman: "You know her? I can go get her..."

Summers: "You're seventeen, your dad died. You're here from Arizona..."

Norman: "Yeah, all true. Listen, I'll be right back..."

Summers: "Just the two of you. What the fuck do you know about running a motel?"

Norma: "...Can I help you?"

Summers: "Looks like you need help."

Norma: "The fuck you say."

Summers: "I'm Keith Summers, my great-great-grandfather built this house in 1912. My grandfather built that motel in the Fifties. That's my grandmother's rug you're beating. This property has been in my family for over a century..."

Long time, long line of men. I wasn't sure what would happen, but I had a pretty good idea -- the tone in his voice reminded me of nothing so much as the time **Veena Sud** killed the Internet's dog, that same entitled, privileged whine -- but I had no idea how far it would go. Which I guess was the point.

Norma: "Listen, I know it was hard to lose it to the bank. But I mean, it's ours now."

Summers: "I know everything about this place! Every nook and cranny, every dirty secret. You don't know how this place works. You don't know how this town works. What makes you think you can run this place by yourself?"

This is what happens when we don't do what you say. This is what happens when you try to build a life that isn't about you: You think something's been taken away. When you're entitled to everything, someone else having something feels just like this: Like it was taken away. Like your ownership has been stolen, leaving you with nothing. "Who the hell do you think you are, living without caring what I think about it?"

Rule #1 For a Happy Life: Never explain privilege to a person while they're actively demonstrating it. You'll get nowhere. She knows enough to know that the only thing he's going to hear is another man, so she becomes one. It works enough that he stumbles back and away.

Norma: "Because *I can*. Get the hell off my property and don't come back."

Summers: "Go ahead, call the cops! I fish with half of them, we grew up together. This is my house!"

When he rapes her, I said out loud, *that's what he's going to say*. "This is my house," or maybe, "This is my town." I didn't believe it, but I said it. I should have known better.

Norma: "That was okay, that didn't crack any concrete. He's pathetic, a drunk loser slob who needed to yell. But he won't be back."

She says it, but she doesn't believe it. She knows better.

BEAST OF BURDEN

Inside the house, it's the 1960s and everything is safe. It's only when they step outside that the concrete starts to crack. They're listening to the Stones on an old cabinet player, inside the house: Jagger swearing she'll never control him, not even if she gives in; begging and begging for her to give in; demanding to know why his wild free selfishness isn't working its usual magic: "Ain't I rough enough, honey?"

Norma: "This roof's been here since the '50s, man. If you reschedule me again I'll just go someplace else. I'm not waiting until next century."

When the doorbell rings, they both freeze. The music practically screeches to a halt. The world of men, intruding: Coming to take them both, to separate them. Lock them in concrete. Even the girls have boys' names, out there.

Bradley: "Mrs. Bates? I'm Bradley Martin, we're friends with Norman from school! Can he come out and study with us?"

Norman: "Ladies, hi!"

Norma: "Nice to meet you, but we've got tons of work to do here..."

Girl: "Your house is so cool!"

Norma: "Thank you, sweetie. There's a shit ton of things to do, but it's got potential."

Norman: "I mean, maybe I could..."

Norma, without looking: "-- Nope, sorry. Another time."

Bradley: "That's totally fine! Nice to meet you, Mrs. Bates! Goodnight, Norman!"

BACK INSIDE

Norma: "Heh. No way."

Norman: "How could you do that? You put words in my mouth..."

Norma: "That was the part where you say *Yes* and I say *No*, and you *know* that and I'd know you know that, so you'd just be doing it to..."

Norman: "You want to start, to have, a life here. This is how that works. That's how that looks, you have friends and you connect with people, you let them into your life..."

Norma: "You don't know them yet. You have to be more careful than just that."

All she ever wanted was a home for both of them. She's giving it to him and to herself: A beginning, a real thing. A lake in the concrete world they'll be safe.

Norman: "She's pretty! Maybe she kind of likes me! I'm seventeen! *Why do I have to be careful?*"

Norma: "Do not lose your temper with me. I'm protecting you."

He runs upstairs and she tells him to stay there, but she doesn't mean it. He'll come down, smiling, unctuous, to compliment her hair or the work she's done on the house already, how much work they still have to do. Together.

UPSTAIRS

He punches a bunny, then regrets it. "I suck," he says without conviction; he texts Bradley and throws himself from a third-floor window, onto the porch and then down. When he gets to the bus stop, they laugh: He's carrying his books. He actually thought they'd be studying.

THE PARTY

Is over the top, in a kind of great way: There's a blacklight bed-jumping room, all Minaj lips and glowing undies; there's an acid heaven of lasers and smoke and Chinese lanterns. People kissing, rolling joints, passing beers back and forth. Dancing. Black Rebel Motorcycle Club: *"I need a rival/ I need a rival/ I found my soul and I set it on fire..."*

He finds himself in a gorgeously lit kitchen, all blue and cold, arranged between several red objects on the counter, watching everything happen. He's not shy, he's not crazy. He's just watching. Making up stories, listening to the even-pithier Radiohead: "The Tourist," if you can believe it.

"Sometimes I get overcharged/That's when you see sparks..."

He realizes he's staring at Bradley a second before she does.

"Did those dumb bitches leave you here by yourself?" This is how she moves, in the concrete world. She speaks its language.

Norman: "I'm good, actually. Lots to look at."

Bradley: "Are you... was that a line?"

Norman: "No, I mean I am literally looking at everything. But the fact that you think I was hitting on you means that's a thing reality might admit, which means..."

Bradley: "You are sorely different, Norman Bates."

Norman: "I wouldn't know. People who are different don't know they're different, because they have nothing to compare it to. That would take words. A mirror."

Bradley: "You're a beautiful, deep, still lake, in the middle of a concrete world."

That's exactly what he is. There are gators down there, in the black, but he is beautiful, and deep and still. Untouched. The concrete world keeps you trapped, tortured: One thing all the time. One thing defined by words, by men: What a person is, what a man is or a woman is. What to fear. The concrete world would look at Norma(n) and see just a reversal, just affirmative action, just the old story told backwards: Because to acknowledge what it really means, that stories happen even when you're not there to tell them, would tear the whole world apart.

If the world had room for a woman like Norma, they wouldn't feel the need to turn her into this. The world has an immune system -- call it male privilege, call it the patriarchy -- specifically in place to deal with bitches like her and it's breaking down. In some countries, on some socioeconomic levels, the old ways aren't working anymore and Bradley's proof. But Norman's proof too.

Norman has the distinct and historic pleasure and pressure of being part of the first generation of young men in the world, in the correct country and socioeconomic level, to have this sort of mother. He is the birth pains of what happened to the world, the day women became people; he doesn't make a lot of

sense to everybody else because they're still stuck on obsolete stories: Stuck in the world this story last described, a century ago.

But tonight he's poetry, to them and to himself. He's poetry, tonight. Broken words, reformed. Curated and placed perfectly between objects.

Norman: "That's kind of weird."

Bradley: "*You're* kind of weird."

He loves it. He holds her gaze -- like his mother, he barely ever blinks when he's considering you -- and for a second she can see it: He's not shy. He's the opposite of shy. It's just that he's quiet enough you could be mistaken: "...Weird *good*," she murmurs, hypnotized.

Richard appears; he seems to be the boyfriend, he calls her "Brad." She introduces them, laughing -- Richard's homework tonight was a diorama of the Globe Theatre -- and he absorbs the weird, good vibe. His hostility is submerged, he doesn't see Norman as a threat, but he's not enamored of the kid either.

Richard: "Great. Listen, babe, Jones just got here. Let's go say hi?"

Against his obvious wishes she invites Norman along, but he doesn't need to go. He's happy in the quiet, cold kitchen. Everything is still.

SUMMERS

When Keith Summers breaks in, Norma screams for Norman until she is hoarse. And when he rapes her, this is what he says: "This house is mine. And everything in this house is mine." And in her eyes you can see it: "Fuck me for trying. Fuck me for thinking I'd found a loophole, a crack in the concrete. A world safe from you."

All she ever wanted was a home. She made the mistake of hoping the world would overlook it.

Once Norman's knocked the guy out with an old black-steel iron note, she takes a second and then tells him to get the keys off the guy. Her son can't see it, but she's been handcuffed there, to the table. The table that was Keith's. Summers's legs start to jolt, as she gets herself free and she sends Norman off for bandages: He cut her, hand and panties, with a box-cutter. He brought gaffer's tape and handcuffs and a box cutter, to the house that was once his. It wasn't going to be a short night. He's not dead yet, but he really should be. Soon. Sometimes it's best to turn the rape into a murder. Honestly, sometimes that's the right call:

Summers stands, handcuffed and grins at her. Even without the power, he knows what words will work. *Words*: "You liked it."

When Norman returns with bandages, his mother has stabbed Keith Summers about twelve times, with a large kitchen knife. *Poetry*. The blood is pooling. He calls her name, "Mother!" She's quiet. It is all quiet. She gave him a home and they took it away again. Every nook and cranny, but she won't call 911. It's not like she's pressing charges; it's not like it's the first death.

Norman: "It was self-defense!"

Norma: "This will become public, it'll be in all the papers. Everyone in town will know."

What she means is, the town did this. We are in a hostile place. Like any other place.

Norma: "Who's gonna book a room in the rape-slash-murder motel? We came here to start over, I'm fucking starting over."

And what about this? Where the hell was Norman? He lies for a second, but he can't lie to her for long. When he admits he was off at a party, it's without a lot of prelude; he sets his back straight and admits it with honor. He tells the truth: He honestly thought it was about studying. And then, seeing she's still pissed -- that the rape and the murder, he just witnessed are about to go on his permanent blame record -- he pulls the most manipulative move of the night: He flips out.

"I didn't know -- it hardly matters right now, there's a dead man on the floor, there's a lake of blood, what are we supposed to do, clean this up with paper towels and spray cleaner? *I don't think so*, holy hell! Mother! We're totally screwed, what are we doing? *We don't know what we're doing!*"

She reels him in, saying his name again and again. He lets her calm him. It stops being about him and starts being about them again. She goes quiet and cold and looks around and starts to plan.

I'll tell you this -- and it goes for both of them, already Norman is there -- the majority of shit that is wrong with you started out as a solution to something. The human mind is expertly functional and extremely efficient when it needs to be: Most non-chemical crazy is just solutions that stayed too long -- scaffold for a building that's since been built, that's now made weaker by it -- which is by the way why it's dumb to be ashamed of them. In this case, that little histrionic breakdown did exactly what it was programmed to do: Force her to compensate, to assume the shape he needs her to assume, so she won't flip this energy and attack *him*.

I'm not a doctor and if I were I wouldn't be caught diagnosing TV characters, but I will say this also: There is no marriage stronger or more toxic, than a borderline and a narcissist. *None*. And that's because those are the two strongest survival strategies we have, that just happen to perfectly feed each other's highs and lows. (Barbie the cokehead and Ken the investment banker: Borderline, narcissist.) They are weaponized crazy, both of them, and they are damn good at keeping you alive and in one piece. But the second you're not actually *surviving*, they'll move right in. Take over your whole house. We aren't born manipulative, we're *beaten* there.

"Norman, I'm sorry. I'm sorry this dirtbag raped me. But here you are and here I am. And he's not gonna win this one. So you go wash up a little, toss your bloody clothes and get your shit together."

MIDNIGHT

They bustle the body down the hill to the motel. Just for the night, he can damn well stay outside their home.

Norman: "Are you *positive* we shouldn't call somebody for help?"

Norma: "No one is ever going to help us. No one has ever helped us."

It's awkward -- beautifully so, all the way through the episode; like you can just imagine the bruises the actors got bumping around all the time -- but they get him into a bathtub. At one point Norman drops his end and even more blood -- "*How can there still be more blood?*" -- stumps out onto the carpet. As

they're hoisting him over, she goes in with him: For a second, she's stuck under Keith Summers. But when she gets out, tripping on the sheets, she flips them back onto him with just her foot.

Norman: "Mom, what are gonna *do*?"

Norma: "We're gonna clean up that bloodstain, man."

But when she turns on the light, it's an absurd amount of blood soaked through, so, new plan: They tear up the carpets, not just here but in all the rooms with carpet that matches. She talks it out, to herself, hilariously conversational:

"So that way, this creep goes missing, anyone comes, starts asking us questions, you know, nothing will be out of the ordinary here, we're just... we're just doing some renovations, you know? We're just, like, *recarpeting*."

AFTER THAT

She's shoving rolls of carpet into a truck, one-handed with her injury, when the Sheriff drives up. Inside, Norman throws himself to the floor, having just found a very scary manga full of torture porn we don't really get a look at, beyond one picture of a girl in the shower.

Sheriff Alex Romero (Nestor Carbonell, aging into a dead ringer for Anthony Perkins) introduces himself and Deputy Zack Shelby (Mike Vogel, ace-looking as usual). There's something odd about their reasons for being there, but Norma can't track it: They must have known Summers was losing it, but don't seem to know that his enemies/victims had already moved in. They say they saw the lights on -- hell, maybe they figured Summers would try something. But something's off. Maybe she's seeing things; cops are always bad, but right now they're absurd.

Romero: "Norma and Norman? That's unusual."

Norma: "Boys take their *father's* names all the time."

Norma does a good job of acting like a person -- admittedly, a person who just happened to have cut herself open pulling up carpets in the middle of the night, like any old manic episode -- but not so good that they don't randomly ask to check inside.

Norman stashes his comic back under the carpet and goes into Good Boy; they're astonished that she's got him up and working so late and she laughs. She had no idea how late it was.

Norman: "Everything's good here. Except for this carpeting!"

Norma: "Sheriff Romero wanted to... see what we're doing, I guess? A little interested in design?"

Romero: "Wouldn't put it that way."

(Shelby: "Although I'm, by the way, loving that you just called him gay...")

Norma: "Well, what man is? My late husband, may he rest in peace, hated that stuff."

Shelby: "Oh, you're a widow? Sorry about that."

Norma: "Six months ago. Listen, I need a cop on my side. I can tell by the way you jumped on that, and the effect me calling another man gay had on you, so let's do some flirting."

Romero: "While you're doing that, I'm going to go use the bathroom you stashed a body in."

There's much talk about that, which does double duty of ratcheting up the tension incredibly while also letting Romero drop the fact that he was a friend of Keith's and thus should not be trusted anyway. They all wait, listening to him piss and make strangled conversation. When he comes out, he does not seem to have noticed that he was peeing near his dead friend's body and then they're called away.

NEXT DAY

An already unsteady Norman notices blood on his shoe and suddenly his mother is getting raped and murdering somebody right in front of him all over again, so he dashes away from his empty lunch table and, to keep it from being a total disaster, up some stairs to get away from the lunchroom before he pukes.

Richard's friends laugh at him, but he's gotten the download from Bradley by now and drags them away from the scene: "He's new, all right? He's not used to the food yet." (Making Richard Slymore the William Katt -- the semi-okay boyfriend of the compassionate Amy Irving -- and not the John Travolta -- the, well, John Travolta -- if you see what I mean. For now, at least.)

Emma Decody arrives, a quirky cutie-pie with cystic fibrosis severe enough that she totes a glammed-up oxygen tank on wheels with her: "Make sure you're done, don't try to cut it short just because it's embarrassing..." Once he's done, she produces a mint for him and he stares at her.

"I'm kind of an expert on vomiting. I have CF, so I've been on meds my whole life. Some of them give you any number of hideous side effects, puking being one of the more pleasant ones. Do *you* have some sort of chronic illness?"

He says no -- he's not *exactly* wrong -- and she seems crestfallen for one hilarious second, before she remembers to introduce herself. Turns out they are in Miss Watson's Language Arts together, although he didn't notice the first couple days. She makes sure he's okay, and then chirps sweetly at him and walks away. She's awesome, which he immediately groks; she's more accessible than the girl who only sorta likes him. He clocks that too.

TONIGHT

They carry the dude to the car and then out to a boat. It is serene, this lake in the concrete world. He rows them to the exact center and she goes dark again. Taking words, this time, from his mouth.

Norma: "I suck."

Norman: "Blaming oneself is a common response to the trauma of..."

Norma: "Hah! No, honey. I mean us. Today while you were puking I had a whole scene to myself where I discovered that they're building a new bypass on the far side of town. A new main road. I suck because I bought us a motel that nobody will ever know is there."

Norman: "Strange that the real estate agent wouldn't mention that..."

Norma: "Is it? Because I'm pretty sure we got it at auction and he was unloading a toxic asset, and I'm pretty sure it's his entire job to stay quiet and hope we're dumb enough not to figure things like this out, and most of all I'm positive of the fact that *everybody is the worst*."

Actually she says "suck" a few more times, which at first I thought was a script hiccup that shoulda been caught but then I thought, *suck* being their family's go-to negative word makes a gruesome, smart kind of sense. Everybody has a mother, but only one specific type of person sexualizes breasts -- they, too, had a mother -- but in Batesworld you never have to stop sucking, etc.: "Everyone I have ever *known* has sucked. Except you."

Norma: "...*God*, you're too good for me. I'm the worst mother in the world."

Norman: "Mother..."

Norma: "*Look at what we're doing*, Norman. You deserve so much better. When you were born it was like God gave me a second chance. And all I ever wanted was for life to be beautiful for you. And *look at it*. Look at what your life has been. I mean, what good am I doing you?"

"You are everything. *Everything* to me. And I don't ever want to live in a world without you. You're my family. My whole family, my whole life, my whole self. You always have been."

You want this to be some cartoony kind of prequel thing about this cartoony memory you have of the Hitchcock movie, but the Hitchcock movie isn't a classic because of monsters: It's a classic because it's beautifully wrought, beautifully told and realistically terrifying. The monster at the end of this book, hell, maybe Janet Leigh's the first person he ever kills. You know what I'm saying? This isn't a story about wackadoo crazies or monsters, it's about a basically reasonable, if sort of unhealthy, family unit that trips and falls into some nightmares. Provided for them by a world that is fairly realistic, all things considered. (A dream of our world, at least.) (And if it fails, knock wood, it won't be because it failed at this prequel side of things: It'll be because it was too good at the other stuff and it scared off all the so-called "men," who will start using words like "mess" and "irrelevant" because they need things in their own language.)

I mean, it's not a situation of "don't think of an elephant" or the incest stuff or any of that: I wasn't being facetious when I mentioned *Gilmore Girls* and *Grey Gardens* and *Mildred Pierce*. You already know the difference between those stories and this one: Everybody's got a mother, but there's a difference between daughters and sons. Put a *boy* into one of those scenarios, one of those worlds where femininity reigns and you'll end up -- we're told, over and over -- with a Cornell Woolrich or several Tennessee Williams characters, or a monster like Norman Bates. (Go back far enough and you can see generations of American fathers terrified into violence that this'll turn his kid gay, for instance.)

But it's really just the same old tale: A mother who couldn't be alone and a boy who wasn't ready to learn the difference between being a husband and being a son, when it was time. That's not how monsters get made, just wimps. Mom-rapes and brutal murders and these horrible people in the town, and apparently pervy manga, are how monsters get made. That and whatever is already going on with Norman that we don't know about yet, but is just another burden Norma's carrying so he doesn't have to.

Norman: "*It's like there's a cord between our hearts...*"

Norma: "Honey, that's from *Jane Eyre*. Orson Welles says it to..."

Norman: "Joan Fontaine. Yeah, but you know what I mean."

Not Mr. Rochester and Jane, note. Norman retreats into old films, but there's a slyer joke being made here about remakes and reboots and copies of copies and art. And, of course, the fact that Rochester

owns a house with a madwoman upstairs, who comes between him and his true love even though all she wants is a home. And all he wants to do is give it to her.

Rochester: "I've a strange feeling with regard to you. As if I had a string, somewhere under my left ribs, tightly knotted to a similar string in you. And if you were to leave, I'm afraid that cord of communion would snap. And I have a notion that I'd take to bleeding inwardly."

Norman: "It's you and me. It's *always* been you and me [by design]. We belong to each other."

Norma: "I love you, Norman. You're the best thing that has ever happened to me."

They sit there, on their midnight date, and feel good and healthy love feelings. And then they push Mr. Summers out of the boat, wrapped in chains, down to the bottom of the lake. He rows them back, then, to the concrete world. To the house on the hill.

NEXT DAY

It's raining when the men come to replace the sign. One of the most beautiful things in the world is the aqua color of the opening sequence and the little A&E bugs in the corner of the screen and the kitchen at Bradley's party. If you saw it in the daytime it would be a little garish, but at night -- surrounded by literal and figurative darkness -- there's something so sad and lonely about it. That motel sign, in that pale electric blue. It says *morgue* and *killing floor* and *ice* and *sparks*.

In his bedroom, as the sun sets, Norman gloats over his little book. His story full of nasty dreams. The girl takes a shower, cowers in the bathroom. There are tender kisses and violent ones. A girl is chained to the floor. A man wraps rubber around her arm and pulls out a needle. Her dress barely covers her. The story's in a language Norman doesn't know; it speaks to him in a language that does.

She pulls him to the window, once the sun is set and shows him the sign. She turned it on, just for him; she made it the perfect blue, for him. She put words on a thing.

For about week after this is posted, I'm gonna get emails you wouldn't believe, death threats and the whole thing, from men who feel attacked and brutalized by the mere suggestion that they don't run the world. When you've never been disagreed with before, by someone you actually were paying attention to, that's probably a slap in the face and it can take a man to some very slippery places very quickly. And the reason I know this is that every single time I -- or any of us -- write about this stuff, we get these emails and strange anonymous calls and weird angry comments on years-old blog entries. But I mean, what are you supposed to do when somebody responds to an emotionless explanation of privilege with a hysterical demonstration of it? Try to be loving, if I feel like it, and try to speak to where they're coming from. If I'm hung over, delete it. But I'm not exaggerating: It's not *sometimes*, it's *every* time. I can't imagine what it's like for women, it makes me want to barf if I think about that.

I tell you this not to complain, or whatever other ego thing -- being a feminist, especially if you're a man, doesn't make you a bad-ass: it makes you *human* -- but because I know it's true, and so you'll know that this is how the world works: Norma Bates isn't done being punished. This is a scarlet letter big as the *world* she's putting up, and they won't forgive her: She took a thing that belonged to men, that they were too stupid and sick to control, and she took down their signs -- "Seafairer," *sic*. -- and made it something fairer still: The BATES MOTEL. But are those just words? Or are they poetry?

Norma: "It's ours, Norman. It's our very own. And you know what? You know that new bypass? They're not gonna build it."

Norman: "When did *that* happen?"

Norma: "It didn't! Yet. I'll think of something."

Norman: "I'm sure you *will*."

He grins, her head nestled in the crook of his neck. It's a smile that says a lot: The empire, this sign that marks it for the world to see as theirs, as belonging to them. But oh, the cleverness of her: That belongs to him too. There's something in his smirk -- for a moment -- that has to do with her smell, her indomitable will. The way she wraps around the world.

"What's important is that we're together. And as long as we're together, then nothing bad can really happen. Right, Norman?"

NEXT WEEK

Something bad, probably multiple somethings, really happen. Dylan, for starters, and of course Norma's gotta work Plan Shelby, so that'll be a relief. But hopefully we'll get to know the school kids better, before the cops come back about Summers. It won't be long -- he represented this evil town's reaction to their presence and it didn't die just because he did -- but I'd like to see the motel up and running, so they have something at stake. I'm trying to avoid spoilers because clearly this is going to be a shitstorm. But there's one thing I am really intensely curious about:

BECAUSE

At this moment of his smile at the window, as she's saying those last words, somewhere -- who knows where, maybe in a basement or an attic somewhere, maybe right in this room -- a fluorescent light, just as lovely and just as pale, flickers on. It shines on a girl, chained to the floor. A man wraps rubber around her arm and pulls out a needle. Her T-shirt barely covers her. She rouses, shivering. One eye opens to the cold, concrete world.

One way to answer the next question is: If she doesn't know whether she's real anymore, how are we supposed to say?

PREVIOUSLY

In the wake of her husband's "mysterious" murder, Norma Bates bought herself and her seventeen-year-old son Norman a motel to run in a lovely seaside town called White Pine Bay, leaving a life of tragedy and a much less dependent son behind. Of course, it wasn't long until the community's secret creepiness made itself scarily clear and Norma was -- I'm comfortable saying -- forced into killing the motel's very vile former owner, Keith Summers, which has brought her onto the radar of the WPB P.D.

Meanwhile, Norman picked up some BFFs -- including a hot girl named Bradley and a dying girl named Emma -- hit up a fairly intense party, and found himself the proud owner of a very dirty torture/porn comic... not to mention some conflicted feelings toward his encouraging slash discomfiting English teacher, Miss Watson.

All in all, an eventful couple days.

THE TORTURED WORLD

Norman obsessively stokes a flashlight over the pages of his little creepster manga, flipping them like a zoetrope: the girl in the shower of Room #4 bound and gagged. Nothing too graphic yet, but there are two men in a couple of the drawings leering like wolves, with just enough detail to their cartoon faces to again suggest that this is something that actually happened -- or is happening -- here at the motel or elsewhere. His fascination is blank, perhaps a little spooked. But he keeps looking. And when the doorbell rings, he swiftly hides the book under his mattress and slides the flashlight back into place: on Keith Summer's rape utility belt, under his bed.

It's late -- or early -- enough that Norma's got her robe on when she heads downstairs. And when she sees her firstborn, Dylan the Halfblood, all she can do is stand, unblinking as ever, and stare him down. He's wearing a motorcycle jacket and he has a feral **Volchok** cast to his face, like a **Son Of Anarchy** or one of the **Shameless** kids -- he looks *lost*. All we know for sure is that he needs money and has no problem with calling his mother a bitch.

MORNING

Norma: "...Because if I ask him how long he's staying, that implies *that* he's staying. It opens the conversation to include the possibility. No, he's here for money. I'll give him money and send him on his way..."

Dylan: "No breakfast for me, thanks."

Norman: "Could you at least not leave the bread sitting open like that?"

Norma: "Also why are you here at all?"

Dylan: "Because it's home, *Norma*. It's what people *do*."

Norma(n): "Yeah, we're teaming up on you obviously, just like you assumed."

BUS STOP

Bradley: "Where'd you go after that party? Hook up with somebody?"

Norman: "No, just snagged my book and went home. It was about studying, I thought."

Bradley: "Studying sucks, no doubt about it. But you now, we could actually study together sometime..."

Right then, Bradley's father's car goes zooming past the stop, careering and eventually crashing. The kids go running after it, screaming all the way, and Norman throws his back into opening the driver's side door: Inside, Bradley's father is barely alive, still smoking, burnt to a crisp.

LATER

Norma: "Wait, you're thinking somebody set fire to his warehouse? That's insane and awful."

Sheriff Romero: "No, that's White Pine Bay. You're going to need a much stronger stomach."

Dylan: "Nice town you picked, Norma..."

Norma: "Stop calling me that. And go run some errands for the motel, if you're gonna stick around."

Romero: "Have you seen Keith Summers? Because this is his abandoned truck."

Norma: "That's so weird. Everybody keeps getting the horns this morning. Good luck with that, though. I hear he was a swell guy... for a drunk rapist who lost his family's property and didn't know when to keep his goddamned mouth shut."

(Swoosh.)

LANG ARTS

Miss Watson assigns them a list of classic poets, with a partnered assignment: *Why is this old poem still relevant today?* Why would you, for example, take a poem from 1960 and construct an entire TV show about it, in a post-cellphone/post-PC world? What parts of our humanity are inextricable enough to cross that divide? What parts of your humanity -- even what parts of your *day* -- still reach back across the decades or the centuries? Writing is about telling somebody who isn't there that they aren't alone, so you feel less alone: Poems break time just as they break language.

Emma: "Your staring at Bradley is nothing new, so I don't really care whether you're staring at her empty chair is in the context of this assignment or just an achievement in regular creeping."

Norman: "Yes, Emma. I would love to do this assignment with you. Please do invite yourself to my house of horrors where I live. Bring your oxygen tank to make it even bleaker, would you?"

Is it possible Emma Decody has somehow gotten more even beautiful since the pilot? That's nice. Looking better always makes you feel better, that's what I say. And vice versa.

After school, Norman brings a potted pink flower to the ICU, but Richard Slymore intercepts and coldly promises to hand the plant over to Bradley just as soon as he fucks right off.

CANDY STICK

Is the name -- and motif -- White Pine Bay's finest/saddest (/same thing) ecdysiastical establishment has given itself, after what I'm sure was an exhaustive search for the grodiest possible name you could give a strip joint. "What really says *infantilized idiots* but also involves licking?" Now if I had a strip club...

Well okay, I always said that if I had a strip club it would be called "Naked Keanu" and all the girls would look like Keanu Reeves circa 1992, but that's only because I read about this very real club in a magazine when I was a kid and have never been able to convince anyone that it was real and not a dream I had or an urban legend.

But for the purposes of this conversation, I would call my strip club "Wangdoodles" and there would be a caricature cartoonist on staff at all times who would draw a picture of you sitting there with your exaggerated erection and sell it to you for five bucks, because from what I can tell strip clubs are mainly about showing other men how big your heterosexual boner is getting, which is just one more thing I don't understand about straight guys and how that whole thing works. All the video screens would be closed-captioned loops of the dancers, sans makeup, tucking their kids into bed and then explaining directly to the camera what happened to them.

Dylan can't help but notice a guy bellied up to the stage, weeping and although at first he is defensive about his tears, he immediately apologizes. Quite an emotionally open environment, this "Candy Stick." Turns out he's crying about his boss, Bradley's Dad, about whom he seems to care very deeply.

Dylan: "I just moved here, but I respect your emotions and I support you unequivocally."

Crying Man: "Let me buy you a beer for your kindness."

Dylan: "Is that money? I too would like some money."

BACK HOME

Norma: "On the one hand, thanks for picking up the motel's new linens. On the other hand, you are coming home very late and you smell like candy. Not the good kind, the gross kind."

Dylan: "I get it. This is me ruining your idyll fantasy with Norman, your child-boy-husband Mini Me. Okay? I get the memo. I grew up with this crap."

Norma: "He's a good boy! He eats off plates, like a person!"

We get some background now: Norma married Dylan's father when she was seventeen -- leading me once again to compare Norma and Lorelei Gilmore, in that we stop at the age of our trauma and then heap undue pressure on our kids when they turn that age -- and then eventually left him for Sam, Norman's father who is now quite dead.

Dylan: "Yeah, how'd that second marriage work out?"

Norma: "Here's the thing, I hate you. Just fully hate your ass."

Dylan: "I'm well aware. But what to you looks like resentment and anger feels a lot to me like being left out of the seventeen-year tea party you've had going on with the Boy Prince..."

Norma: "Uh, we're cool? We're buds? He likes me? You're acting like it is less healthy to have a positive and loving relationship with your kid. Like your constant bitching and malice are the norm."

Dylan: "So to speak."

Norma: "So to speak."

Dylan: "And the motel? The new car? Where'd all that come from? What's funding this little..."

Norma: "Sam was an insurance salesman, so he was well-insured."

Dylan: "My implication is resounding, Norma."

She bursts into tears, finally, demanding that he call her by her name: Her name is Mother.

It's a very interesting dynamic, this: You have two sons, each of whom relate to her in a much more adult way than is maybe optimal. One of them, she subsumes, the other resists. One of them is a native, the other an invader. But when you defend the walls around your domain as strongly as Norma Bates -- we know -- must, it doesn't really matter if the invader was born here. He's just another envoy from the nightmare beyond those walls. Whatever darkness he represents for himself is nothing compared to what he symbolizes: They'll never stop coming. First you dream and then you die.

NEXT AM

The Bateses start the day on their knees, obsessively scrubbing down the scene of the crime. No, lower. Not even on their knees, on their bellies.

Norman: "Just because they found his truck doesn't mean they're going to..."

Dylan: "First of all, you two are pathetic. Even cleaning the kitchen obsessively together?"

They don't even look up; when the doorbell rings, Dylan's grateful to answer it.

Emma: "Hi! Look at you with your bad-boy self. I'm here to study poetry."

Dylan: "But you're a girl! A cute one. That's... I wanna see Norma deal with this shit."

Norman: "Oh hey. Listen, Norma. This is a school person. Let's do normal for a second. Don't let her ask you questions."

Norma grills her to death, to the point where even Dylan takes pity on his brother and tries to distract: No good. We get the whole Decody story -- dad owns a shop in town, family's originally from Manchester UK (just in case Olivia Cooke's accent slips, I bet, although it never does) -- and finally she digs in, almost greedily, on the obvious.

Emma: "The tank? I think of him as my pet. He goes with me everywhere. Perk of having CF."

Norman: "Mom, we have poems to..."

Norma: "-- Let me get the full story on cystic fibrosis, honey. Nobody really knows what that is."

Emma: "My lungs produce hella gross mucus, making it impossible to breathe. Lung transplant, but that comes with its own problems and demons..."

Norma: "I hope you get one! But if you don't, what's your life expectancy?"

Emma: "Uh... like twenty-seven? Did you really just say that shit to me?"

Norma: "Twenty-seven, huh? Sounds good."

Dylan: "Jeeeeeeeeezussssss."

When she finally lets them go, Dylan moves in for some shit-talk.

Dylan: "Think she has to take that tube out of nose when they make out?"

Norma doesn't speak, just keeps mopping. It's actually a fairly cute moment, all things considered.

UPSTAIRS

Emma explains Blake's "The Tyger" to Norman in the context that they are on a show about Norman Bates -- i.e., that scary evil things somehow exist in a just world ruled over by a loving God -- while leaving out the actual point to be made, which is that the world is still just as loving, for having monsters in it. We find the tiger scary, the poem finds him "fearful," because we're on the outside looking in; we observe and we put ourselves at the center of that observation. But from the tiger's perspective, he's just a tiger. The trick to understanding a loving universe with monsters in it is realizing that the tiger's *right*.

Norman and Dylan are both Norma's sons, mortal boys, fearfully and wonderfully made. She made them. You don't blame a tiger for being born a tiger. It's why Blake was so obsessed with duality. For every Tiger he wrote a Lamb and still asking the same question: Do you even *know* who made you? Does not knowing make it hurt more? Or does not caring make it hurt less?

Glossing over more talk -- O.J. Simpson, Charles Manson -- Emma jumps back into the poem, finally noticing Norman's shameful little secret sticking out between the sheets.

Emma: "Never saw you move that fast! I bet its porn. That's awesome, let me look... this is lovely. Did you draw this?"

Norman: ("*Even my sexual issues have sexual issues...*")

Emma: "Whatever, I clearly read dirty manga all the time. This is nothing. Can I borrow it?"

Norman: "...Sure? My flashlight was getting a little, um. Overworked anyway."

The tiger doesn't always know it's a tiger. But it suspects.

NORMA

Takes a moment to moisturize, in that sensate way the ladies do on TV, but just when you're wondering who's watching her -- what man's gaze justifies this moment -- or why this is even happening at all, she runs her fingers over a jagged scar that runs like lightning up her thigh. What does she remember when she sees it? It seems sad. She's interrupted by Romero and Shelby, asking questions about the missing man.

Romero: "You said you hadn't seen Keith Summers, the other day? Because a drive-by witness saw him crazily standing in your yard yelling at you and your kid..."

Norma: "I meant, uh, I haven't seen him *recently* or anything. He's a crazy creepy crank, but that doesn't make me a suspect in some kind of missing persons..."

Romero: "I never said he was missing, Mrs. Bates."

Norma: "Okay, but you totally did. Missing truck, missing guy..."

Romero: "Now I'm going to get needlessly authoritative. I don't like mouthy women. I'm coming in."

Norma: "How about a warrant? You got one of those?"

She addresses the whole thing to Shelby, absolutely sure he's on her side and working the angle, but eventually once the warrant talk starts Shelby fades out into the shadows: Too hot. Romero lays down some veiled threats and the boys take off. I don't think Romero picked up on any of it: The oppositional stance she took with him, the conspiratorial way every word out of her mouth was a secret message to Shelby that his boss is a numskull. Romero didn't get it, but Shelby sure did. I'm thinkin' this jurisdictional threesome is very close to becoming a twosome.

On her way into town Norma settles on Everclear's post-apocalyptic ode to California, in which the singer takes his beloved past the limits of the world of men far enough to watch it crumble and finally spots her deputy.

Shelby: "Helllooo, Mrs. Bates."

Norma: "Go head, cuff me!"

Shelby: "That's the sheriff's style, don't take it personally. Can I buy you an apology coffee?"

He's beautiful, yes, and playing right into her hands: For a moment she pretends to consider it and suddenly she finds herself considering it, and then they're having coffee.

Norma: "This whole thing is about my son's life falling apart. To lose your father... I thought this would be a clean slate. Hope. And Romero's really fucking with that."

Shelby: "Let me be completely honest, I don't think he was being entirely as accusatory as you seem to think."

Norma: "I know when I'm getting bulldogged, cutie."

Shelby: "He just really loved Keith Summers. He's taking it personally and that makes him intense. Not to mention his Billy Zane eyelashes making everything so creepy all the time."

Norma: "I get that. The feelings of men."

Shelby's invited to something called a Woodchuck, which he laughingly explains is a local festival, to which she is invited. She finds herself happily agreeing and he immediately reminds them both that it can't be a date-date: Keith Summers wouldn't approve. But they could both *go* and both *be* there at the same time... she laughs, loving it. A little cloak and dagger.

UPSTAIRS

Norma: "First of all, how do I look? Do I look like I'm trying?"

Norman: "You're Vera Farmiga, you don't ever have to try. But I am a little annoyed by the implication. What's this about?"

Norma: "So apparently somebody saw me nearly get into that fistfight with Summers..."

Norman: "The guy we killed? Well, that can't be good."

Norma: "I know, right? But I'm going to seduce Deputy Shelby, so it'll be..."

Norman: "Fucking A."

Norma: "I'm doing what I need to do, bro."

She shucks her top and he can't stop watching; it worries them both. It worries her that it worries him.

Norma: "I'm your mother! It's not weird or anything."

Norman: "Don't do this. You do not have to and you cannot do this."

She plops down next to him, nearly roughhousing, and takes him by his jealous hand.

Norma: "It doesn't mean anything. It's not a real date. It's for us. It's for us, here."

Norman: "It's a community event? Then I'm coming."

Norma: "You aren't. And you know you aren't."

She kisses him goodbye. I like it when she tells him things he already knows; it's part of the game but it's also like, there are a million things going on under the surface of that lake, he knows everything he could know, so she's not just telling him what to think: She's taking one possible thing and making it concrete. Her words, in his head:

"You are not coming and inside yourself you have known that since the conversation started, making your performance of wanting to come both flattering and futile. Now, isn't that right?"

MARTIN WAREHOUSE

Dylan's crying friend brings him to work, the better to indoctrinate him into the corrupt underbelly of large-vessel maintenance. It happens incredibly quickly: The guy (another *Battlestar* alum, and trust me I wish I could stop doing that, too) barely has his sawdust mask off his face before he asks whether Dylan can handle a gun. A gun! This *place!*

BACK HOME

Dylan: "What's for dinner, Honey?"

Norman: "Shut up and nothing."

They way they clash around the kitchen, her kitchen, presages violence long before it comes. Norman is fussily offended by the name that pops up when Norma calls Dylan's phone: "Apparently The Whore is calling you?" He answers brightly, calling her by name, and Norman immediately attacks. They fight, discussing the Whore as they toss each other around the room.

Dylan: "Norman, you do not seem to understand that she is ruining you."

Norman: "True or not, why are you here? You really are messing up everything. It's just like she..."

Dylan: "I am not here to mess anything up. I am here because I have no options. But rest assured, if you come at me again I will destroy you."

It comes fast, and slow. You see him think it out, you see him try not to give in, but when it does it comes fast. *Sometimes I get overcharged/ That's when you see sparks.* He needs a rival. Has he noticed, do you think, just how much the Deputy looks like Dylan?

Did She who made the Lamb make thee? Norman comes at him again -- already near tears -- this time with a giant hammer; Dylan ducks out of the way just in time and he carries through all the way into a plate cabinet, shattering glass and ceramics everywhere before Dylan puts him down again.

"She's not a whore," he grits into the floor. Not on his knees, but lower. On his belly. She doesn't really want the Deputy, didn't she say? Didn't she say it was all for him?

THE WOODCHUCK

Homey banjo/fiddle country plays, as a burly man helps Shelby win a victory sawing a log.

Shelby: "I told you it's stupid. But fun."

Norma: "It's fairly great, actually. Regular people doing things in plaid clothing."

Shelby: "I am sure that Keith Summers is in a ditch somewhere. He was into bad shit. Generally the man was a trainwreck."

Norma: "Why does weird shit keep happening to me and my kid? Like, this town seems to be like this, but then it isn't."

Shelby: "There is no town that is actually like this. We make artisanal cheeses and sell organic pork foods. And yet everybody here drives expensive cars and lives in mansions. The White Pine Bay economy is not built on..."

Norma: "You surely don't allow illegal things -- bad things -- to happen here."

Shelby: "We deal with things. Things are dealt with."

Norma: "Like that guy that got burned up?"

Shelby: "That'll be handled."

Norma: "Not what I asked, but even creepier. Great. I need to be home by nine, which is now."

AFTER

Norma: "What has happened to your beautiful face? It has gone to hell!"

Norman: "Fight with Dylan. The why is not important. Don't worry about it."

Norma: "You both have to realize that I won't stand for *you* getting hurt."

Norman: "So kick him out, with my blessing. Today has been a shitstorm for the Norma/Norman Tea Party department, and knowing you went on a date isn't helping."

Dylan is attracted to this thing, the Norman/Norma thing, for about a hundred reasons: It's something he has never had but in even brighter colors; it's fascinating because it's fucked up. Like Norman before her date, he can't stop looking at it. But most of all it's his particular tiger, his form of crazy, focusing right down in on that dynamic: We play the roles we were taught to play. He's always been an intruder -- then be an intruder, represent the whole world of men. Normalize them both. He's always been jealous of their closeness -- then point out how toxic it is, obsess on that. Sometimes protecting Norman, sometimes attacking Norma: Whoever is going to give you the most attention, that's who gets it. He loves Norman because she does; he hates Norma because she loves someone else; he hates Norman for being the beloved second try, the second pancake. He's always been the mistake, that's fine: Every Cain has an Abel. That's when you see sparks.

DECODY TAXIDERMMY

Emma summons Norman to her family's shop -- and, one presumes, his future place of employ -- for something important. She's amazed by the state of his little face, but he distracts her handily with family questions until she can't stand it anymore. Because dead things don't interest her; because the only thing worse than living with death is thinking about what happens next; because she has something much more vital to tell.

Emma: "Sit! I'm going to tell you a real story about real, living things."

Turns out she's been translating his porn, because we live in the future and you can do that now, and the story is terribly sad: Four Chinese girls get tricked into slavery in America and end up prostitutes. One of them is bound and beaten, eventually OD's, and the other girls are made to bury her in the woods. One by one, they're sold off into other sex slave rings. Based on a picture of a mountain, Emma has determined that they can find this grave and prove the whole story.

Norman: "This is all a little peculiar."

Emma: "What's peculiar is a seventeen-year-old boy using the word *peculiar*."

She kisses him, and he goes still. After a moment, looking at his face, she grins. "You in?"

He's in.

She's in, too. Maybe more than he understands, because in a way this is her story. She's not a sex slave or a drug mule or anything like that, but she *is* going to die without ever having seen the world. She sees these girls and she wants them to be real, because nobody will ever tell you a real story about real, dying girls. Nobody will ever tell their story, either, except for Emma. Emma and Norman and this strange, awful book. She reads the story and she wants to know them; she wants to save them. She sees these girls and she thinks, "That's exactly how I feel."

YOU SEE THIS GUY?

Dylan puts on "This Guy's In Love With You," keeping the vinyl theme inside the house. The song gets to its most operatic heights when he complains -- as if it's killing him -- just how much he needs her love. Looking at pictures of Norma, holding a baby; the world full of Norman: "*We know each other very well...*"

Norma: "The fuck, it's the middle of the night! Turn down that Bacharach!"

Dylan: "Take it easy, skirt."

Norma: "You fucked up Norman's face and you need to leave. You're toxic. Out by morning."

Dylan: "How did Sam die, Norma? You made it so hard to find you, I ended up doing a lot more research than I should have. The other insurance guys told me all about what a great husband and father he was and I thought, it would be pretty interesting to tell them how great a husband and father he really was. How well you guys really got along and all."

It's an old scar. She just smiles, sadly, and tells him to keep the music down at least. Right at the saddest part of the song. Who made you? Some of us grow up in fire, some of us in rain, but not one of us is born angry. She's just selfish enough that she can't hear him, sitting there -- he's still a child, his face is so soft and so hard -- letting the music speak. "*I want your love*," sings the song. "*I need your love...*" She just wants it quieter. Like God ever looked at the tiger and saw what She made, and just went back to bed.

And if that did happen, what would the tiger do? Miss Her. Miss Her and Hate Her. Norman hasn't even escaped yet and it's going to destroy them both; Dylan started out on the outside and he wants her to love him just as much as he wants to take her down. It's a rare love triangle in which nobody really owns anybody else.

THE MOUNTAIN

Emma's pet tank goes in a little backpack. She leads him to the very spot -- majestic, the Pacific Northwest looks like a beer commercial, every time -- and he smiles. It's a poem and it's very relevant to our world today, but it's not the kind of thing Miss Watson would understand.

Halfway up the mountain, Emma starts coughing. It's thick and sludgy and altogether terrifying, so Norman orders a halt.

Emma: "My dad taught me to meditate. You see yourself rise up out of your body, past the town, into the golden light of the whole universe. You realize how small you are, and how closely we are connected to the larger thing."

How you get to a loving universe, in my experience, goes similarly: Tigers and monsters happen, sure. But what made those things? Bigger tigers, bigger monsters. And so on, forever. So it's a dead end, a hallway that ends nowhere, a clock wound up to breaking and slowly leaking entropy. You go looking for fear, you're going to find it.

So that means, then, that you have to go the other way: Determinism is a love story between you and the entirety of space and time and it does not -- technically, absolutely, by definition -- get sexier than that. You are held, lovingly, at the center of something so infinite and so massively complex that it concretizes words like *infinity* and *complexity*. Makes them actual. It's a stark light but a bright one, a compassionately dispassionate one, burning bright: All the tigers under it aren't monsters and never could be. We were only ever tigers.

She wrinkles her nose at herself, giggling, and sits. But over the next rise he sees it: A huge pot field, big as a lake. And then the tenders, big guys with guns: Dylan's new army. She runs with him, fast as she can, for a very long time. Her panicked breath, wheezing, takes them to the very shed they were looking for, but they keep running. This part goes for a while. They ford a stream and keep running, all the way back to her very recognizable, bright orange VW Bug. Another thing Norma would probably appreciate.

XII. THE HANGED MAN

Shelby waves Norma through, past the maddening crowds and the ambulances, but she still sees it: A man, hung upside-down on fire. Right in the middle of town square. Dealt with, Summerisle-style. Maybe Richard Slymore was being more than unfriendly, the other day at the ICU. Maybe he was protecting everybody, if this is the way the town runs itself.

Horried and confused, she drives on. Breathing harder than Emma Decody. He barely even looked her way, when he was waving her on. The thing about being a woman is, if you know their game you can fight with tricks. But this newer generation, these younger guys, they're just as sneaky as a woman. He looked her in the eye, when he told her what they'd do. He looked her in the eye and smiled, just like a Bates: Set a man on fire, we'll string you up right on the wharf. Burning bright.

If this is what they do to a *man* who breaks their rules, what would they do to a woman?

NEXT WEEK

Norman has an attack of some kind, probably due to Miss Watson being accidentally sexy; Dylan continues to try to cockblock the Tea Party through reasonable doubt; Norman continues to try to cockblock Operation Deputy through irrational fears and accusations; Norma probably tries to hide the fact that she's apparently now in danger of being set on fire by the entire town; Norman fights Emma over whether or not to trust the cops with their scary sex-slave story; we learn more about the bizarre WPB economy that apparently involves cash crops along with boats and hired killers; presumably, more hard-to-watch violence erupts suddenly with very little warning.

PREVIOUSLY

Dylan Bates has moved into his mother's house, with no idea that on their first night there, Norma and Norman were forced to kill a man and toss him in the lake. The cops are suspicious, which is tricky because in White Pine Bay the law works a little more Old Testament than it does anywhere else -- which means Norma could well find herself stabbed and tossed in the lake too, if her alliance with Deputy Alex Shelby doesn't work out. While looking for the possibly imaginary dead Chinese sex slaves detailed in a mysterious illustrated journal, Norman and Emma Decody came upon some of the marijuana fields that provide the town's economy its liquidity, and found a shed where one of the girls may have been buried.

FOYER

Dylan bros out with the gun he needs for his new job -- obviously, guarding the pot fields -- by posing in the mirror in a variety of uncomfortably Steven Seagal-type ways. The goodness of Dylan -- and his probable path toward being a man -- are delineated here: He's a boy, but dangerous; he enjoys the power of the gun, but finds it uncomfortable no matter where he shoves it down his pants. He manages to go from off-putting to fairly sympathetic over the course of the scene and even moreso the episode, but it's interesting that a house and story with so much emphasis on men and women spends so much time literally on the symbolic value of the ultimate destructive phallic symbol here: Does the gun make him a man? What exactly does it do?

KITCHEN

Dylan: "Good morning, Mr. and Mrs. Bates."

Norma and Norman roll eyes, instinctively irritated less by his words -- and blithely ignoring the connotation because he just doesn't get it -- than the fact that he's there to say them. Norma asks him to handle a delivery for later (the replacement carpets for the four units they tore up in the middle of the night) and he proudly demurs.

Dylan: "You know, I'd love to. But I have... a job."

They can't hear the pride in his voice, so they don't know to congratulate him. It would never occur to them that he'd try to impress them or find a way inside: He belongs to the world of men, and everything he says and does chafes them, because he's brought it here. So he gives a "fuck me for hoping" finger to the world and sets off for this job. They don't even notice that he's gone, except for the relief.

SCHOOL

Norman doesn't want to chat at his locker, but lovely Emma is having a time, sputtering over half-tears and generally acting a mess.

Emma: "Okay, I'll do bullet points. A) I'm terrified those guys with guns are gonna try and find us because we saw their stupid pot field. And B) I feel so incredibly guilty I couldn't sleep."

Norman: "Guilty? It's not like we were *trying* to see their pot field..."

Emma: "It's because I was pimping out those dead girls so you would hang out with me..."

Norman: "Ugh, girls."

Emma: "And it was self-serving and I didn't really believe the story until we saw that shed, but then it was like this electric shock. *Oh my God, that dead girl is buried there.* I could feel it..."

Norman: "Stop, chill, relax. Breathe..."

Emma: "*That dead girl is calling us from her grave!*"

Instead of rubbing his palms together with trainwreck excitement, like everybody in my house did at this moment, Norman gets very intense on her about this, and finally since she won't chill, demands the journal back from her.

Norman: "It's pornographic and we're at school..."

Emma: "Most text messages are dirtier than this!"

Norman: "But you're, like, obsessed with it."

Emma: "I'm not the one that spends all night staring at it while clicking a rapist's flashlight off and on."

Norman: "So it was in my room... so what? I found it and I didn't throw it away."

She stares, because a second ago they were friends. She doesn't know that's a classic Norma Bates move: State your alibi aloud, even if nobody can hear you and you're okay. You can just shove all those bad feelings way down where they won't ever come back to bite you.

LANG ARTS

I think what happens is that Norman's feelings about the décolletage of Miss Watson -- who is not Norma's age, true, but is sure as hell *not* Emma's -- connect up with the journal, in a teenage morass of complications and neural connections that would be grody future kinks in regular life. But because Norman is a crazy, instead/also means that he goes into Smiling Norman mode for a second, possibly blabbing the word *burning*, before blacking out altogether.

My working theory is that this is a murder we just saw, the Norman cycle of duality and violence and unconsciousness, just... without the actual murder part. We skipped to the blackout, or he kept himself from doing it or he couldn't actually do it. Does that sound right to you?

HOSPITAL

Doctor Guy: "We're doing like a million tests. Hey, does your son do this? Black out suddenly?"

Norma: "Uh... certainly not. Nope. Never, not ever. Not at all. Not even once. It's certainly not something I've covered for before. And I wouldn't say it's related in any way to the hefty life insurance settlement we got six months ago. No sir, not my son. He's awake or he's asleep. Nothing in between."

POT FIELDS

Dylan: "Is this where they shot *Deliverance*?"

Ethan, Stripclub-Weeper: "What's that?"

Dylan: "Uh, the movie? *Boy, you got a pretty mouth*?"

Ethan: "What kind of movies do you *watch*?"

I guess because of the gunslinger/Western motif going on with Dylan this week, the music goes to a kinda Inon Zur, *Fallout* place as they make their way down. The previous shift pulls guns on them as they're walking up, and Dylan has a mortifying moment of trying to do the thing he practiced all morning -- be a man -- but gets all tangled up in himself. The dudes leaving laugh at him for a while, welcome him to the fold and leave them to it. They settle in to wait: \$300 bucks a day to chill, drink beer, sleep in shifts and watch a \$5M pot field do nothing, with occasional pheasant.

HOSPITAL

Norman's in a gown and bed, clicking away at the monitor, until finally Norma slaps his hand to make him stop; then grabs it to hang on tight. They assure each other several times that everything is going to be fine and that they are not at all worried or freaked out. He's watching one of his old movies, I can't figure out what it is but it's about some real "hip" "kids." One of them is named Gladys and she gets "the sneak" for somebody's cousin Phillip, which makes another friend laugh, presumably because she's a "dick hound," I guess. I don't really know old sayings, I guess they were called something else back then.

The carpet guys call from the Motel and after much wishy-washiness Norma allows herself to leave Norman there to deal with it; she's stressed out enough that she doesn't notice Bradley Martin coming down the hallway from the ICU, carrying a potted plant. I had a fantasy she would clothesline her without even stopping, but there's carpet on the line.

Bradley: "Norman, you look luminous in this scene. Like a beautiful, six-foot tall baby."

Norman: "Notice how my dick boyfriend didn't jump between us and totally cockblock you?"

Bradley: "It was really cool that you came to see me when my father was burned alive. Most people seemed to think that was too weird, or a bummer."

Norman: "Well, I have no social skills and I'm into you. So I guess you could say that I was being brave, but that would be mostly incorrect."

Bradley: "My father is in a medically induced coma and I sincerely doubt he is going to make it."

Norman: "That is weird. And a bummer. My father died under super mysterious circumstances about six months ago. In our garage. So I guess I win, for now."

Bradley: "Scootch over so I can crawl in bed with you and watch this old-timey mystery movie about the girl and the cousin."

"Come on, Gladys -- we can still get away with childish enthusiasm..."

Bradley: "I just want to be happy."

MOTEL

The carpeteers have delivered one extra room's worth of carpeting, and Norma has just about fucking had it with today. Then mean old Sheriff Romero comes in there -- warrant in hand - to search the building. He is a little bitch about it, too, because that's how he rolls. Good thing Norma and her son have been scrubbing the kitchen down for like a week with every kind of cleaning product. Bad thing, though, is how Norman kept Keith Summer's raping utility belt under his bed, in a not-very-hidden fashion.

HOSPITAL

Doctor: "The tests came back negative."

Norma: "Great! Let's get out of here, I need to scheme with my child-husband about our murder real quick."

Doctor: "Uh, we still don't know why he blacked out..."

Norma: "And you never will. Sayonara!"

Nurse: "But a doctor needs to check him out, lady."

Norma: "I have a doctorate actually -- it is in Get The Fuck Out Of My Way. I got it at the university of Look Into My Crazy Eyes, I'm Not Playing."

HALLWAY, RUSHING

Norma: "...No idea if they found anything. It was one of the most horrible experiences of my life, I couldn't do anything..."

Norman: "Did they find anything?"

Norma: "Did you hit your head when you fell over on it? I just said no."

Norman: "Yeah, but did they find anything in the house?"

Norma: "If we weren't escaping from a hospital right now I would take you to a hospital. No."

Norman: "Well, I bet they found something."

Norma: "Hmm?"

Norman: "I mean for sure they probably did *not* find something."

HOME

There is something eternally teenage-boy guilt about the way Norman tears his ass up the stairs the second they get home, like just launches directly up the stairs as if she's going to beat him to it and find his dirty magazines or whatever. Did you burst out laughing when he did this?

Norman: (*Whoosh.*)

Norma: "What's up?"

Norman: "I have to change clothes and lie down and take a shower and do homework!"

UPSTAIRS

Sadly, no. The belt is gone. The duct tape, the flashlight, the handcuffs, all the rape devices and the belt they came on. Which is enough to send Norman scooting down onto the floor, breaking into tears like the saddest little ashamed-est guy, and it's dreadful to watch. He keeps asking, "What's wrong with me?" And it's enough that yeah, he kept a souvenir of the big rape/murder, and yeah, he probably should not have attached so much meaning to it or used it as a ceremonial object in the sex-torture-comic book ritual, but mostly it's both and mostly it's neither: He also feels very, very stupid for having left evidence lying around that could betray their secret.

The classic example of luminosity-entails-numinosity is Freudian in a way we're avoiding for the most part, but it goes like this: Why did the little boy steal his father's favorite pen and take it to school with him? Because it was a special object to him, it signified things he didn't have words for. He stole it to get power, which is why most stolen things get stolen: They glow.

Luminosity here, think about how the murder weapons on a Clue card glow with that weird glow: They are special things, the way Norman jumps out of the world to Emma or Bradley or the way Dylan can't keep his attention from swinging back to their weird connection. And then *numinosity* is the meaning of the glow: The thing acquires religious or spiritual or otherworldly import, because of the power, and because of the things the pen-stealer doesn't have words for. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. Always radioactive. Another word we casually toss around, but has a real meaning that applies here, is *taboo*.

In fact there was a Jungian conversation around transvestism -- specifically, men (usually straight) who derive sexualized sensation from wearing women's clothing -- that had to do with one of the myths of Herakles, which has all kinds of degradation stuff that doesn't necessarily apply here, but basically that in this therapeutic formulation the man would put on his mother's clothing as a kind of armor: A way of taking her protective strength and power on for himself. Like little kids trying on their parent's clothing, but twisted into a kink as a grownup. Same luminosity, same numinosity, as anything else, but a hearty reminder that females of all species have been protecting their kids for a lot longer -- and a lot harder -- than males.

I have trans friends that are turned off by the Norman Bates myth because of the weird way it permeates our culture, which is already so confused about gay and transsexual and transvestite and pedophile and whatever else you can cram in there. It's something I was wary about going in, but I've never felt that way about the movie and I certainly don't here, because if anything this is a situation in which *everything in their entire house* is basically luminous, basically numinous -- look at the way each room is used differently, with a different spirit and family dynamic -- and even objects brought into that house acquire a glow if they come in the right/wrong way. So while I'm not exactly dying to see Freddy Highmore in slingbacks at any point in time, it's firstly not really ever gonna be a question of gender *identity*, that's simply part of the whole difficulty people seem to have separating their memories and cultural understanding of the movie from the actual movie itself, but most of all because hiding this gun under the bed was -- just as it was this morning for Dylan -- *already an act of drag*.

So he sets his back straight, in that way he has when he's about to tell the truth, but first: He very carefully unrolls an immaculate sweater down, straightens the collar, snaps the cuffs. Mother calls it putting on her face.

KITCHEN

Norma: "I make a turkey pot pie! And it smells magnificent!"

Norman: "I kept Keith's belt."

Norma: "Do what?"

Norman: "When we loaded his body into the car, I kept it? Hid it under my bed?"

Norma: "You *hid* it there? I mean... why? Why would you do that? Why would you want to keep that thing?"

His face crumples, because he already knows that he doesn't know why: That he doesn't have the words for why. And that's the part that is killing him right now. Not the complications, not the betrayal of their household, none of it. The why of it. And that's what she keeps asking, and that's why he breaks down. And once she sees that, she stops, because that's terrifying. And sad.

Norma: "...All right. Well, if the police had found it, they would have said something, so. And they haven't. Now I've got to go figure this out. Enjoy your pot pie and please do not be so hard on yourself."

DYLAN

Ethan explains the White Pine Bay Thing to Dylan, how the pot works and how the justice system works and how sometimes somebody will set your boss on fire and you will cry and cry, but eventually that person will also be set on fire.

Ethan: "Everything should settle back down now. You want a beer?"

Dylan: "Uh, yeah."

There's a rustle in the bushes, but Dylan's fear turns to joy when he realizes it's a pheasant, and he can impress somebody with something for the first time like ever. Something about the conspiratorial smile with which he shoulders the rifle -- like it's turned back into just a gun, from whatever it was before -- made me realize I am pretty much completely on Dylan's side from here on out. Normal isn't always good, but good is always normal.

EMMA

Bonks her tank up every single goddamned step up to his door, knowing he's going to give her shit and not caring about it. Bradley, I think, is fascinated by the beautiful lake as an object; Emma recognizes something in it, subjectively. I don't think it's a love triangle happening so much as Bradley is somebody he can safely crush on without pissing off Norma -- a childish enthusiasm -- whereas Emma is giving him something nobody else has: A decent shot at accountability. "You be crazy all you want, I'm still your friend and I'm not asking for shit or making you my emotional pack mule, so you be the judge."

Norman: "I can't even talk to you. I don't feel good, from falling sideways at school in front of you if you remember, and my mother doesn't allow visitors in the house when she's gone or really ever at any time..."

(She fully shoves her tank in the door to keep him from slamming it in her face.)

Emma: "I *never* feel good, Norman, but life keeps moving. She was real. If we forget about her, then the world will forget about her. It'll be like she never existed. Like her life didn't matter."

Which is valid, but he can't ever forget -- between the tubes in her nose and the tank she clonks all over town -- that we're not just talking about the one dead girl. He takes her into the kitchen, and she shows him the one repeated non-Chinese figure in the entire thing: The number four, over and over. He makes the connection to the motel room where he found it and she drags him down the hillside.

ROOM 4

Emma: "So they bring 'em over here from China, and then the guys come to the motel for a test drive..."

Norman: "Yeah, but like who? Deputy Shelby, probably. He's a motherfucker."

Emma: "Yeah or Keith. Have you met Keith Summers? He is fucking *awful*. Sex-slave buying, nooks-and-crannies awful."

Norman: (*Weirded out giggle.*)

Norman gets a text from Bradley about how they now have "shared custody" of the plant she brought, and his cute grin about it causes Emma's eyes to roll wildly. Immediately, she finds a Chinese character scratched into the bottom of the sink bowl -- where the girls were chained -- and snaps a picture with her phone.

SHELBY

With her unerring Shelby GPS, Norma tracks the Deputy down immediately for a short weird conversation about some things, but also not about anything. Negative space around the thing.

Norma: "I am just a poor widow with a broken wing! Why is your boss so mean and scary?"

Shelby: "Don't worry about it."

Norma: "But money and medical bills and the hospital!"

Shelby: "I said don't worry about it."

Norma: "It's not like you even found anything, *right?*"

Shelby: "I mean it. *Do not worry*. Talk to me about this later when I am not a cop."

Norma: "I'll be at your place at eight, wearing my boobiest dress."

Shelby: "I will bring my sick body and also my magic ass. Things are going to be fine."

Outside his vehicle she snaps her collar -- just like Norman -- and stands there for a second as if to say, "We're probably going to do it. My life is so hard."

HOME

Poor old Norman's sitting on the steps when she comes back.

Norman: "What's going on?"

Norma: "I am going to put on my face and have dinner with Shelby."

Norman: "But dinner is our thing!"

Norma: "He obviously knows about the belt, so now I'm going to have to throw him one."

Norman: "Well, Norman Bates. You've really kicked it up this time."

SHELBY

Norma: "I'm here. Keepin' it tight."

Shelby: "Damn, girl."

Norma: "Why do you live in a house that is like an old lady house?"

Shelby: "I like things to be cozy. Would you like a Jack and Coke?"

Norma: "I am, after all, a woman of refinement. Have you noticed my boobs?"

Norma: "Thanks for the booze. So listen, what's the deal? I have a million problems."

Shelby: "Why don't you tell me what the deal is. Like this belt thing."

Norma: "What belt?"

Shelby: "Don't be hurtful. We are going to help each other, and that means trust, and trust means honesty. So be honest. Why would your kid have that belt under his bed?"

Norma: "My broken wing! My persecution!"

Shelby: "No, lady. I hid the belt. Stop worrying about Sheriff Romero and start worrying about how I am in love with you and we are going to be together forever."

Norma: "Oh, gotcha. Okay, I can do that. New status quo."

Shelby: "What's with your huge jagged scar on your leg?"

Norma: "Testament to a life well-lived, sir. It was an accident when I was a kid."

Shelby: "Speaking of kid accidents, did your kid accidentally kill Keith Summers?"

Norma: "I'm not going to say yes and I can't say no, so I will just say that."

He looks her in the eye and tells her he's an angel.

Shelby: "I know you've spent your life taking care of other people, or like any other narcissist talking endlessly about how you take care of other people. But in this case, I think it is true and you have a son with problems like you could make a whole TV show about. But the good news is that I am going to take care of you from now on."

Norma: "Even though we met five seconds ago? Okay, I am cool with whatever."

Shelby: "God, you are so beautiful, it just breaks my heart."

Norma: "That sounds like something you would say to a sex slave named Beautiful that you have locked in your basement. I am into it."

They make out. I guess probably they do it. It would be a shame to waste all that hotness.

PHEASANT

Dylan: "Funny you should ask. I learned to hunt in Aberdeen, SD, while I was on a natural gas fracking crew."

Ethan: "Fracking. So you're from South Dakota?"

Dylan: "No, I guess Arizona. That's where they moved here from. My dad grew up in Kansas."

Ethan: "Tell me more."

Dylan: "My mom... um, maybe Missouri? Or Colorado?"

Ethan: "You honestly don't know where your mother grew up?"

Dylan: "Actually that is kind of weird, I guess."

Ethan: "And are you close with your little brother?"

Dylan: "You must not have met my little brother."

But it makes him think.

HOME

Is it *Angel and the Badman* he's watching? I am not good at this at all, which sucks because it seems like a big thing with this show. It seems appropriate, but not as appropriate as what they're saying when Dylan gets home:

"There's plenty of room on either side, do you have to come bulling in here between us?" And the guy says, "I didn't see you," but he's lying. "You interrupted a very important discussion on serious matters regarding big things!"

Norman: "Mother!?"

Dylan: "No, man. Just me."

For the second time today, somebody takes the remote away from Norman to get his attention.

Dylan: "Can I give you some advice? You gotta cut that shit out. 'Mother?' It's just weird."

Norman: "Whereas I guess calling your mom a *whore* is perfectly normal?"

He notices the hospital bracelet around his brother's wrist and gets concerned a little bit -- when Norman fusses with it, the whole complex surrounding his hospital visit still being a monster of a thing nobody knows about -- Dylan pulls out a knife and cuts it for him. When you see Norman through his brother's eyes, it's so sad and delicate, like an unborn chicken baby. Made of twigs.

Dylan: "So how come Norma's not here doting on you? You're the fave, I'd expect some homemade chicken soup bubbling on the stove, or..."

Norman: "She's out, she should have been back hours ago, she hasn't answered my calls or texts and I'm getting really worried."

Dylan: "Noted."

Norman: "Well, I mean it's not like *her* to do this. I'm not just being aggressively Norman about it, she's additionally *not being Norma*. It's a two-party system. I can't even sleep, I tried to go to bed and I just... I mean, what do I *do*?"

Dylan: "You get the fuck out of this house once in a while, for starters. What she is doing, has done, to you -- it's not healthy. You need some perspective."

Norman considers this. You can look at the two of them on that couch, with the old owner's old black and white TV and just imagine them being real for a second. Or like, I already thought Dylan was a good idea, narratively and psychologically, but for a minute you can see how his need to be a man and Norman's desperate need *for* a man would collide in this way: Like another unwanted, unwelcome father figure, but one who -- being Norma's son as well -- actually makes more sense in the dynamic. Like maybe it will work out. Dylan thinks this too, although not in words. He flows, in the absence of Norma, toward his brother, and says the best line of the entire episode:

Dylan: "I'm sorry you tried to kill me the other night."

It's great because it *sounds* hilariously passive-aggressive, but really it's just the best way of addressing and describing what went down: Now that you've mentioned the whole "whore" thing, by the way, I feel bad that that happened and that I beat you down. But what is sort of brusquely tender in the moment becomes something entirely different.

Norman: "I *hardly* think I tried to kill you."

Dylan: "You came at me with a meat tenderizer..."

Norman: "Oh, now did I."

You can see Dylan make note of this and get weird and a little sad about it, and then stow that entire line of thought, all in one second.

Dylan: "You were... pretty bad-ass."

Norman: "Yeah, I'm sure I was."

Dylan: "Our family is like inordinately screwed up."

Norman: "Yeah, I guess."

Their bodies relax, side by side on the couch. The angel and the bad man.

Norman: "Well then, I'm sorry I tried to kill you. According to you."

Dylan: "Yeah, it's cool."

MOTHER'S BED

When Norma gets home, he's in her bed in his pajamas. Couldn't sleep in his. She wakes him, gently and he sits up for the report.

Norma: "Zack has the belt. He seems to want to help us..."

Norman: "*Seems* to want to... nobody ever helps us, nobody ever helped us..."

Norma: "I am exhausted, go to bed. Just know that I feel fairly safe."

He sits there, begging for the full report. She knows what he wants, but she won't give it to him.

Norman: "This is a bad idea, letting him... use you."

Norma: "Oh, we're not having that discussion."

Norman: "What if he wants more? What if he makes you do things? Things you don't want to do?"

Norma: "I can't say yes and I won't say no."

He's still bristling, terrified, TMI all over the place, so she gets worried. The why.

Norma: "Norman. Why would you keep that thing? I honestly, I just don't understand why. I would like to."

Norman: "You know I keep mementoes -- all that stuff in my room..."

Norma: "Yeah, like nice things. Good days. But that was not a nice thing and it wasn't a good day. I got raped and killed a dude. Why in a million years would you..."

He can't say, because he doesn't know the words. So she nestles into his neck, his favorite place, and tells him over and over that she's here for him. Just for him. That smile from the pilot comes back, that foxy little grin: Well then, it's okay.

NORMALCY

Norman's surprised to find Bradley at her locker -- "Mom said it would be good for normalcy, as if that's possible" -- but before she can say much more than that she's happy he showed up too, Emma arrives to risk His Highness's bitchiest freakout yet.

Emma: "I put that photo of the Chinese character on Yahoo! Answers and -- after sifting through a thousand illiterate responses from people who don't know what the fuck they're talking about and should not have access to the internet -- got a translation. It's *jiao*, it means beautiful."

Norman: "That's a sad name to have when you're a dead drug addict sex slave, but I..."

Emma: "I'm going to the police after school, because I don't know about the police here yet, because I am from British lands, which is why my sudden accent in this scene."

Norman: "The fuck you are going to the cops. We are not doing the cops in this narrative."

Emma: "Norman, why did you just get scary?"

Norman: "I can't tell you why, but we are avoiding the cops and will not be bringing this into your little... look, maybe it's true, the whole thing is real. But guess what, this girl still isn't going to make a difference, to anyone. She's still going to be dead, you're still going to be sick and I'm still going to be who I am."

Emma: "I mean, wow. We both knew that's what was going on, but just shouting it like that at me is really..."

Norman: "Annnnd I'm back. That was awful. I am sorry. I was a real dick just now. I am really, really sorry. You're a good friend and a trusted ally. But don't go to the cops, and don't bug me about it again today. I cannot *deal* with this right now."

He storms off, hands flailing, and she makes the call yet again that he is allowed to be crazy.

TONIGHT

Norman spends the evening in bed, lying there like something taxidermied, as the sun passes over and out. Someone sits on his bed and he sits up to look at her. She's harder, more angry. Hates his little girlfriends more. Is not a whore. Her name is Mother.

Mother: "You were right. As long as Shelby has that belt, he can control us. He can make us do things, things we don't want to do. Just like your father did."

Norman: "We can't let that happen, not again."

Mother: "This is all your fault."

Norman: "I know, Mother. There's something wrong with me."

(There's nobody there. In fact that is the thing that is wrong with you.)

Mother: "You know what you have to do, don't you?"

Smiling just a little bit Norman heads down the street toward the town, standing tall. He climbs up into Zach Shelby's old-lady house, hitting every room on every floor. In the bedroom -- Shelby, a cop, sleeps with a baseball bat; it's luminous, it says ZEUS right on there -- he finds porn, pills, a key ring that could open the basement. A dog attacks Norman and he fends it off with the bat before locking the dog in the room and heading out into the house to put more of his fingerprints all over everything.

The basement -- at first just a garage, quite similar to the one where we met Norman's father -- transforms into a sad sex den, with a video camera trained on a chaise-lounge and a disco ball going giggity over the whole thing, and then a smaller door, slide-locked from the outside. And you know -- and Norman knows -- what he's going to find in there under the fluorescent light.

I don't know what her name spells, but she's still alive -- barely, track marks all the way down just like last time we saw her -- and she knows enough English to beg him for his help. Just as Shelby's arriving home.

NEXT WEEK

Is she real? We still don't know. But we do know that Norman has all the proof he's gonna feel he needs. His problems, besides being a crazy, are twofold: The dead Chinese girl and the purloined rape-belt. And I think pretty quickly in the first act of next week's episode, both of those will not be any easier to solve, for having become two halves of the same problem: Deputy Zach Shelby, the Man Who Kissed Mommy.

Trust Me, 104

"Some Man's Hand"

PREVIOUSLY

Mother told Norman to break into Norma's boyfriend's house and steal back the belt that she apparently hasn't had time to ask for, so he took off down the road and ended up finding a Chinese sex slave chained up in Shelby's basement.

BUT

Dylan saw all of this go down -- on his new motorcycle, which he rides around town dressed like Racer X -- and followed, so that by the time Shelby let his dog (Clementine, btw) out of the bedroom where Norman locked her and came back downstairs, he was able to ring the doorbell and distract Shelby long enough for Norman to get away, which we did *not* know.

Problem #1: Doped-up Chinese sex-slaves have some serious upper body.

Problem #2: Norman Bates... does not.

Norman: "I will come back and get you at a later date, but I have to leave right now because we are in the house of a cop so paranoid he keeps a baseball bat named ZEUS next to his bed, and so scary that he has a you in his basement."

Jiao: "I am pretty sure you should help me out."

Norman: "As I said, young lady, that is on the agenda but it is not an action item at this time. I will return, with tools and remedies. Of all kinds. Sundry aid."

Jiao: "I am just sort of going to pull on your leg while we scream at each other, okay? I get antsy."

Norman: "This is why you shouldn't break into people's houses, I suppose. In case of shit like this."

UPSTAIRS

Dylan: "Hi, we don't know each other so I don't know how suspicious this is going to turn out to look, but could you help me with a motorcycling problem?"

Shelby: "No! I am off-duty and not required to help those in need."

Dylan: "*Hypocrite lecteur, -- mon semblable, -- mon frère!*"

Shelby: "Okay, because we look like differently nourished versions of the same person, I will tell you that a gas station exists. Somewhere."

Dylan: "Do but point in the direction, sirrah, and I will go."

Shelby, nastily pointing: "Ugh!"

BACK HOME

Dylan: "Hey, welcome home. How come you broke into a cop's house?"

Norman: "Do what? I was just on a little jog."

Dylan: "In the middle of the night? In a sweater and dungarees?"

Norman: "Mere exertion is no excuse for being slovenly, Dylan. Think about that, the next time you're *not shaving your face* because you are *too lazy*."

Dylan: "*Dude*. Look me in the *eye*. Who do you think distracted him long enough for you to get out of there? I saved your ass. Tell me what's going on."

Norman: "I am certainly not in any trouble, or under the orders of apparitions. Good evening, sir."

Dylan: "Is it Mom? Are we keeping secrets from Mom? Tell me we're hiding something from Mom, that would honestly relieve me so much."

Norman: "Ugh. You will never get it. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go ice my ankle. An imaginary heroin addict squeeze the shit out of it, and then I walked all the way here."

DECODY HOUSE

Emma's Dad is like so mesmerizing. I've only ever not liked him **once**, and that was very little to do with him ... and in fact he was my favorite part even then, come to think of it. Beautiful man, aging beautifully.

John Lennon from *Backbeat* starring Stephen Dorff: "Little boy, why are you so skinny and in my yard?"

Norman Bates: "I am a friend of Emma's and I wanted to walk her to school, because I was a *real bitch* to her yesterday."

Don Konkey from *Dirt*, which did *not* feature Stephen Dorff: "Well, she has the flu. And what with her CF, we don't fuck around with that, so she's taking a week off."

Norman: "And then she'll be okay?"

Professor Quirinus Quirrell, Defense Against The Dark Arts: "Yeah sure, unless she *dies*. See how that works? Listen, you've got to be Norman Bates, nobody else could possibly be described in a way that would leave that up to confusion, so let me just say this. If you hurt my daughter, I will kill and then stuff and mount you. Are you a decent dude? Because spoiler alert, she's like in love with you."

Norman: "*I am decent*. And I did like it when she kissed me. And my mother practically purred when she found out about your daughter's terminal illness, meaning she would solve several problems of mine you don't need to worry about. And she is one of the most beautiful young women on TV in recent memory. But she needs to pull it together because the heart wants what it wants, sir, and my heart wants Bradley. (And sometimes, *to kill*.)"

I don't know if we know each other well enough at this point for me to share a very private Dawn Weiner thing with you, but whenever that Stephen Dorff e-cigarette commercial comes on, I stop what I'm doing and let it play, and hit mute, and Stephen Dorff says the *most romantic things*. I am speaking for him, true, but I have it down to a science because I have been doing this literally for a year, every time I see the commercial. Just walking on a beach, puffing on an electronic cigarette -- the most embarrassing form of electronics meets the most meaningless form of cigarettes -- and telling me that one day, one day soon, it's going to happen.

"Just what you always wanted, Jacob. To marry Deacon Frost, the vampire messiah from the feature film *Blade*. We will hold vampire raves and smoke electronic cigarettes and we will sleep upside down, like vampires do. All day long. Come live with me in the Chateau Marmont, where Elle Fanning will be our vampire daughter. It is about to get so good bro." --*Stephen Dorff*

NORMA

Hops into Shelby's car next day, which is in always the same place, and he immediately starts touching her scars and getting her all het up.

Norma: "Where should we go?"

Shelby: "How about this motel I heard about? The owner is super hot and wicked crazy."

Norma: "Works for me! But then why did I put on shoes and drive over to this place where you always, always are?"

THEY DO IT

Norma: "Congrats on keeping your shirt on for three episodes, at least."

Shelby: "You pay for Mike Vogel, you get the whole shebang."

Norma: "No kidding. You are absolutely beautiful."

Shelby: "Did you know I am a model and I am married to a model and we have two kids in real life?"

Norma: "My deal with men is such that I was speaking aesthetically. You're pretty like an old woman, or an abalone shell."

Shelby: "What a hilariously weird thing to say to a person! No wonder I parked a U-Haul outside your life the second we met."

OUTSIDE

Dylan continues to inhabit more and more territory; in this case, a rocker outside the motel room where he likes to smoke his smokes and drink his bourbon and -- this afternoon -- give his mother and her boyfriend some serious *après sex* side-eye.

Dylan: "Well hey, kids. Hey, Norma. Gettin' fucked, I see?"

Norma: "Ugh, this is my kid that I hate. Dylan, this is your other replacement."

Shelby: "Hello, young man I didn't meet last night under weird circumstances."

They stare at each other for about an hour and it's creepy and suspicious, and then Shelby takes Norma back to her car, because what happened today is that she drove her car to that one spot from the motel and then he drove her to the motel so now he has to drive her back to that one spot so she can drive her car back to the motel. These people should really think about getting hybrids.

AFTER SCHOOL

Norman is soaping up one of the units' windows when he notices Bradley Martin setting out a roadside marker for her father, who is finally dead. I didn't realize they did this other places than Texas, actually. He crouches beside her with very few words, and she settles sadly into his neck. He smells her hair, but to his credit he doesn't unleash the full scary grin he gives us when Norma does this.

INSIDE

Norma: "Why are you putting groceries in *our* refrigerator?"

Dylan: "Because I live here? Because I have been eating your groceries and now I have lots of money to pay you back with?"

Norma: "I don't buy it! *What's your game?*"

Dylan: "My game is, I went to the store to buy food for you and me and my brother to eat. WTF, Norma?"

Norma: "I hate it. I hate you and I hate your groceries and I hate that this is clearly some grocery-related scheme or scam or flimflam."

Dylan: "Man, you are the worst."

Norma: "Yeah, maybe."

Dylan: "So uh, your cop boyfriend..."

Norma: "*Here we go.*"

Dylan: "No, I just... I don't trust him. For reasons I told Norman I wouldn't share."

Norma: "I'm not going to take dating advice from you, my least eligible child."

She stalks off, clicking her pen over and over just like Norman, and Dylan just kind of shrugs, because That's So Norma.

THAT NIGHT

Norman's coming home from the video store with a few DVDs of old movies he thought would cheer Bradley up. I wonder what they are? I bet they're good choices, like, none of those movies where the chick's dad dies and she bones the nearest guy. Which is like every movie. He spots Shelby issuing somebody a citation, and flips out and runs off, much to Shelby's dismay.

Shelby does not know that Norman knows, or thinks he knows, about the girl in his basement, so either he is being legitimately sketchy in one way or fairly sketchy in the other. When he jumps out from behind a building with a flashlight, though, scaring the piss out of Norman and laughing in his face: Either way, sketchy. Although the

physically revolted faces Norman keeps shooting him -- in between the scared little-kid smiles -- are quite the response.

Shelby: "Hey, Norman! Why so serious?"

Norman: "I'm taking movies to my friend with the dead dad."

Shelby: "Death is profound, isn't it?"

Norman: "Ugh. What did you just say to me."

Shelby: "You're a sensitive kid, huh. Going through a lot."

Norman: "Bitch, you have no idea. Don't touch me."

It was at this point where I had a sort of brain-fizz and I thought, first, that I hope this whole sex-slave thing blows over somehow because I wish Shelby would stay on the show forever because he is awesome. And second of all, that it would be good if Norma turned on him for some reason and he ended up idolizing Zach Shelby for a little while. I can't see the logistics from here, but I just think it would be good, and within bounds, for Norman at some point to crush on Zach.

"Look, I'm going to be honest with you. Because you're not a kid, and you're going to understand this. I really like your mom. She's a good woman, I care for her. So I think that it would be a good idea -- maybe even a *necessary* idea -- for you and I to get to know each other better. Do you like ... fishing?"

Norman can't figure out his game, because even if he's not being sketchy he's being totally sketchy, as mentioned, and there's the whole thing also of the belt: Norman has to do everything Shelby says, because of the belt, and what Norman has no reason to understand is that this is even truer for him than it is for Norma, because he can't imagine Norma actually enjoying Shelby's company. So right now he is his mother: Forced by silent blackmail to do whatever Shelby wants, whether it's sex or fishing or whatever. That's legitimately terrifying.

Norman: "As long as it's to a secluded area on a high cliff where you could kill me and nobody would know. Or vice versa."

Shelby: "You bet! It's going to be wonderful, you're gonna hate the shit out of it."

Norman: "That is for sure true."

Shelby: "Cool, I'll tell your mom so you can't back out. And Norman? Don't you ever fucking run away from me like that again. Cool?"

Zach Shelby has no clue how long Norman's been running. Not as a sport, just... The last thing you want when you're afraid is some man's hand on you. Shelby is lucky enough he doesn't understand that. In the world of men, they don't have to. In the world of men, they don't have to run from other men, because they live there.

UPSTAIRS

Norman: "Mom, I have several bombs to drop on you real quick."

Norma: "Hang on, I'm just trying to figure out if blowing up the entire City Council will stop this highway from being built, or if I just need to kill half-of-them-plus-one."

Norman: "Okay, from the top. Shelby has a girl in his basement, in her teens, on drugs."

Norma: "Whut."

Norman: "My belief is that he was running some kind of Asian sex slave business with Keith Summers."

Norma: "The hell, Norman?"

Norman: "A hand-drawn journal under one of the carpets detailed the whole thing. Anyway, I broke into his house last night and I went down in his basement when she came at me. It was like *The Ring* only sad, and real life."

Norma: "Why? I mean of course you did, but how come?"

Norman: "To find that tool belt. Like you ordered me to."

Norma: "And so... Back up, I what?"

Norman: "You ordered me in no uncertain terms to do this, so I did. Last night, you came into my room..."

It dawns on her what is happening, and she tears up and gathers him to her.

Norma: "I've been meaning to break this to you at some point, but I guess now is an appropriate time. You are crazy as shit. You hallucinate things and black out and..."

Norman: "I doubt that very highly, no matter how many people tell me it's happening. Good day, madam."

She calls after him, but his feelings are so hurt and it's just like, ugh, Norman. Poor old kid. You know how I always say Rule #1 For A Happy Life is, you never explain privilege to a person while they're demonstrating it?

You can't say, "Deputy Shelby, you have worked hard your whole life and you presume acknowledging the facts -- that you are a straight white male in your prime, which to you and to everybody else is the default, even though very few people actually are like you -- gives you certain advantages over other people means your very hard effort is being downgraded, so your brain sets up a whole thing where anybody who brings that fact into the conversation is attacking you, your entire life and existence and worldview." Obviously.

Well, this is why: We confabulate the details we don't know or can't see, and since Norman is *not around* when Norman does this, mentioning it to him in any context -- but especially in this context, where he's telling you about a crazy thing he saw -- is not just a betrayal of the team, it's a Lovecraftian existential attack: You think the world is like this, but it's really like that. And when you don't know or can't imagine the possibility of the world being like that, your only other option is to double down. Not because you're stupid or an asshole, but because going the other way is *literally impossible*: "Oh, up is down? Okay, crazy!"

SHELBY'S OLD LADY HOUSE

He looks just like an angel when he sleeps! An angel that maybe keeps girls in his basement, I mean. Norma heads down, down, into the basement, past the part that looks like the garage where Mr. Bates died, past the washing machines opposite the cell where the girl chased Norman, past the sex-tape setup with the disco ball (which is still there, but not at all as giggedy as last week) and unlocks the Jiao door... revealing nothing.

Now, by nothing I do mean a bunch of boxes that were maybe there all along, but also maybe they weren't. If I found evidence that somebody had been messing with my sex slave -- I don't know, I can't imagine knowing for sure, but I would *posit* -- I would probably *move* her.

Like: "Hey Sherriff Romero, can I store something in your basement?"

Or: "Hey, I'd like to rent a storage locker with 24/7 access? Climate control not really necessary for at least a few months... Oh, I guess about the size and shape necessary to hold a bean-bag chair and a bucket?"

Norma stands at the door, looking at those boxes and pushing on the bruise once again that her son is irretrievably nuts -- and, one would think, also wondering if any of those boxes contains a certain toolbelt she could snag real fast -- when Shelby abruptly, beautifully, sleepily swings into the frame behind her. It's one of two images I rewound over and over, maybe it's the music as well, but something about the way it's done was very awesome.

Shelby, sleepy-eyed: "Why are you in the basement in the middle of the night?"

Norma, fabulously: "I couldn't sleep. So I'm snooping."

Shelby, charmed: "Oh, okay. Back to bed?"

Norma, cutely: "Back to bed!"

NEXT AM: FISHING DAY

Norman puts on his outfit, as tidily as ever, and scowls at his bruised ankle where the girl wouldn't let go with her sex slave dope strength.

Norman: "...And where were you last night?"

Norma: "I took Shelby a pot pie..."

Norman: "Pot pies are our thing!"

Norma: "And then I just stayed there, I guess."

Norman: "I was awake at two AM! You weren't here! I hate it!"

Norma: "You can't keep doing this, kiddo. It's only a bad thing when *you're* doing the abandoning. (Also, keep doing this. I loooove it.) I know you're jeal..."

Norman: "I AM NOT JEALOUS! YOU ARE NOT MY GIRLFRIEND!"

Norma: "Whoa, that is so not where I was going with that. But continue, if you like."

Norman: "It isn't jealousy if the person really is a creep, though."

Norma: "Here's the thing, the weirdest part you keep not hearing. I like this guy. He's kind of my boyfriend. I know we agreed that he was forcing me to fuck him because of that belt and everything, but... Come on. We both knew. You've *seen* the guy, Norman. It's not exactly a *chore*. He cares about us, he keeps talking creepily about how he cares about us, and maybe he does. Maybe he is the one, the one man who is unlike all other men. Maybe we found a **unicorn**."

Linked so I don't have to say the whole thing over again, but yeah: Married Dylan's dad out of high school, fell in love with a monster seventeen years ago. For somebody who has been beaten into this sort of feral paranoia thing she's got going on, she does at least have a rational approach to the possibility of people. And of all the denizens in man's world, in WPB specifically, he's certainly the least blockheaded, the least aggressive, the least oppressive, the most protective. Young enough to be a softer man, born of a better generation; beautiful as an old woman, and just as strong.

Norma: "It is new. He is not a bad man. I want you to like him. He cares about us."

Norman: "It is a trap, he is a bad man, I do not like him, he keeps girls in his basement. I do not want to fish with him..."

So maybe the reason she believed him, when he started that romance-novel talk in the first hot minute, is because she wanted to. Or needed to.

Norma, verbatim: "That's just because of your father. You can't actually believe that any man is actually kind."

Or else that's just how *he knew he'd get away with it*. If he's a bad man, he can smell that on her. And every man's hand before him.

FISHING

After Norma got mad, after Norman nearly showed her -- but then oddly didn't -- the bruises on his ankle that prove nothing, she shouted him into obeying. Now they're on a high cliff in a secret spot, fly-fishing down into the deeps. It is a beautiful place and a beautiful day, and Shelby's trying his damndest.

Shelby: "Sooo... You're like this huge asexual mess, huh. What was your relationship with your father actually like? My understanding is that he was pretty abusive, before you and/or your mother murdered him."

Norman, verbatim: "He had his moments."

Shelby: "Did he ever hurt you, Norman?"

Norman: "No? Which is almost certainly a lie, but you don't get to have that. What's your game, what's the scheme, what's the flimflam?"

Shelby: "Or maybe I'm a good man?"

Norman: "Yeah right. You and Dylan both, just good-manning it up, *contra* every piece of evidence I have ever experienced in my entire life. Good one."

I love this show, obviously. But especially I love this episode because of this: The one repeated thing where the guy -- Shelby, then Dylan, even Romero -- keeps doing this one trick of the light, it's even the title of the episode, and you've just spent three hours seeing what the world of men can do and how far you have to go to stay safe, and then these men just go ahead and remind you that they're *repeople*. But you can't ever *know*.

"Look, I'm gonna be in your life, Norman. And I want to be in your life. But the truth is I am putting myself on the line every day protecting your mom, and in so doing, I'm protecting *you*. Look, I want to take care of her. *And I want to take care of you*. But I think that has to start with trust. I need to know that I can trust you, Norman. And you need to know you can trust me."

Shelby: "Can you do that? Can you trust me?"

Norman: "...Yes. I can trust you."

Your words, coming out of my mouth, because there are no other words. Some man's hand, telling me it's going to be okay.

Shelby: "Good. That's good. That makes me happy."

Norman: "Oh, well then. By all fuckin' means."

Shelby gets a call then, and cuts their moment short. The shudders are still running through Norman, but he's survived the fishing trip, which is more than he thought would happen.

THE DOCKS

Romero has found Keith's hand, identifiable by that ugly watch he wore. "Dumbass," he hisses, and Shelby turns green. That's it, then.

BRADLEY

When Bradley texts Norman for an ice cream date, she's pretty sincere and upfront about how she's only doing it because she finds comfort in him. She can *trust* him: "You seem to get it. You don't ... judge me, or push me to cheer up. You don't know what a relief that is." Weird, but good weird: A beautiful, calm lake.

Norman: "Well, I'm glad you can stand to be around me."

The music takes us back, like in the hospital, to the possibility of teenagerhood: That it's okay to be a kid for a minute, sometimes. Even though it warns him too that she's a heartbreaker. Still in sunglasses, all day long, Bradley tries to verbalize the enormity of death and -- like we've been doing for thousands of years -- fails. They're here and then they're gone, and you never get to see them again. Norman does a better job:

"I think grief is just the period of time it takes for your brain to accept that someone's gone. Because everything in your body, your mind, your entire being, just keeps bringing you back to the moment that they're still alive. It takes a long time for your body to let go of that."

Norman: "It's the hardest thing of all, to let go of someone you love."

Bradley: "I like being with you, Norman."

She brings up the hand, and he tries desperately to stay in control.

Bradley: "I wonder whose hand that fisherman found."

Norman: "*Do they know whose hand it was?*"

Bradley: "No, just some man's hand."

BACK HOME

He rushes home, because it's not just some man's hand, it's Keith's hand, and they are going to drown him and Norma both. He comes crashing in the door and she appears at the top of the stairs with cupcake hands, like a Douglas Sirk heroine, before rushing down to grab him and calm him down: "It's just a hand, it could be a million different hands..."

Shelby appears, immediately, at the door, with backup: "Mrs. Bates? We're gonna need you to come with us down to the station..."

THE STATION

Romero: "I need you to tell me what happened."

Norma, snotty: "The police showed up and said you wanted to talk to..."

Romero: "Come on. I want to know what happened that night."

There were carpet fibers on the hand, trapped under the watch, which freezes her blood, and she tries to breathe through it, promising again she doesn't know anything about it. Finally he cuts through the BS altogether.

Romero: "I am trying to help you here, okay? *I know you did it*. I've been doing this for twenty years, and I know people. I get them, on the inside. It's like a gift. And I know you did it. Now, Keith wasn't always a nice guy. I know that about him. I know he was, um, involved in a lot of things. Any number of which could have gotten him killed."

Norma: "I'm sure."

Romero: "But I *also* know he wasn't happy about losing his home, and about you buying it, and he's the kind of guy that might have tried to retaliate somehow, maybe threaten you, scare you?"

Norma: "Uh, I'm not scared. Nobody scared me. He doesn't scare me, and you don't scare me..."

He asks where they tossed the carpet they pulled up that night, and she nearly grins in his face.

Norma: "I thought you said *you* had it. How are you gonna test it, if you don't have it?"

Romero: "Because there are only three dumps it could have ended up. So just tell me what you did with it."

Norma: "...You know what? I don't recall."

Romero: "Ugh. Fine. You can't remember where you physically dumped carloads full of carpeting. Great. Get out of here."

CUT TO

Norma and Norman, driving all over town, looking for some carpet.

Norman: "That was the first night we moved here, it's not just gonna..."

Norma: "Uh, it will be, and also, so what."

Norman: "Fine, whatever."

Norma: "Did you just *whatever* me? WTF, Norman?"

Norman: "*(Whatever.)*"

Norma: "Is this Dylan's doing? Has he *gotten* to you?"

Which was my second-favorite thing of the night, like, look at yourself. That's so far beyond. And the implication that she really does consider Dylan as inappropriately a peer as it's always looked: That the house is a war ground, that Dylan simply by showing up has declared war on her house. "Has he gotten to you?" Like being a man is contagious.

They arrive at the original dumpster, and of course it's not there, so she calls the department on the bin and puts on a strange voice for them: "Hi, I have a problem? I accidentally threw out my wedding ring..."

Of all the things. They direct her to the dump that bin goes, but when they arrive it's chained up for the night, and Norma suddenly goes batshit crazy, climbing the literal chainlink and shaking it with her entire body, like a werewolf trying to get you. It's marvelous and scary and, because it's Norma, also deeply sad. He gets her down, eventually.

Norma: "What am I supposed to *do*, Norman? It's *in* there, and I can't *get* it!"

Norman, off wordless screaming: "Mom! Shut up, Mom!"

He bitches at her about how this is all her fault, and how he told her to call the cops and now she's sleeping with the cops and it's too late and everything is going to hell and maybe next time you kill somebody in self-defense you tell somebody, and she turns on him, screaming in his face: "I didn't*defend* myself! I killed the crap out of him! I don't know why I did, I was just so angry that he would come into my home, and he would do that to me!"

Norma: "You don't understand, Norman. My whole *life* I've had to put up with things."

He *doesn't* understand. It sounds like complaining, but it's the explanation he asked for: Her whole life, she's had to put up with things, but it's things exactly like this: Scars and pain and being used and being hurt and being tricked and abused and enraged. And silenced. Stuck in a world so sick you can only burn it down, and they won't let you do that either. Keith Summers volunteered, viciously, to become the face of that world. And she killed the crap out of him. And it was beautiful. And now the world wants its revenge.

BACK HOME

With Norma's intense, unending, hysterical sobs rummaging around the house, bouncing through the air shafts and through the walls, Norman sits on his bed tearing in half. She wraps around the world. Finally, he just sets out walking. Not crazy-smile walking, just escaping. Running away.

Down at the units, as far as you can get from the residence without leaving home: Dylan, with his bourbon and his smokes. He's happy to see Norman, but he can't see it.

Dylan: "Hey."

Norman: "Uh, hey."

Norman wanders away again, not wanting to intrude -- and *really* not wanting to deal with Dylan -- and the hurt translates itself into irritation before Dylan even notices he's hurt.

Dylan: "Why do you always run away from me?"

I don't like it when people, in real life or on TV, try to back time up to before they fucked up. The Willow Rosenberg "let's just pretend" trick is my least favorite trick, because you need to control yourself and show dignity, and that means you just did neither of those things twice in a row. But what Dylan is trying to teach us -- and what we had no way of knowing, anymore than Norman does -- is that he's not doing that. Norma acts like buying groceries is this cheap move, the thing that comes before the disappointment, and maybe it is... Or maybe trust me.

And then Norman, between being frightened and offended by Dylan's masculinity outright and being frightened of the Dylan story he and Norma have concocted -- with Dylan playing right along -- he too has no actual reason to trust the guy. Same smell, same rough hands; same snake waiting to strike, coiled in the same world, calling Mother a whore.

But what we get to see is actual Dylan, who loves to hunt pheasant and worries about crying guys in strip clubs and just wants a motorcycle and a mother and a brother. And they're probably both true, both versions of the same true thing, but Dylan's right to be hurt, because he hasn't done a damned thing wrong since the second he showed up. And further, he deserves to be loved: Because we *all* do, and because even if it's just desperation that he keeps giving these lunatics chances to hurt him, he's *still doing it*. He doesn't hold a grudge, which is laudable even when you're not talking about a woman who is a walking knot of grudges.

Without words, because there are no words, Dylan just offers what he's got: The fifth of whiskey in his hand. It's a dare, for Norman; for Dylan it's a gift. He takes a manful swig and chokes on it, so sweetly, and Dylan chuckles. What it would be, to be a big brother.

Norman: "Don't laugh at me!"

Dylan: "That was ... the opposite. I'm so sorry I left you with her, all alone."

Norman: "You have no idea, Dylan."

Dylan: "That she's insane? Oh no, I get it..."

Norman unloads, with hooting owls nesting nearby, in a sudden torrent that washes across Dylan's face: He worries for Norman, he worries for Norma, he wonders how much is true and how much is Norman's particular truth. He has the distinct privilege of knowing how bad things can get, outside their little world: It makes more sense to him than you'd think. And somewhere in there, Norman stops being something she took away from him and starts being something he abandoned.

"I'm so scared, Dylan. Every minute I've lived here, every second, just total fear. And that sheriff's totally suspicious of her, and it's my fault, and Summers was wearing this like police belt when he attacked Mom, and I hid it under my bed -- no, I don't *know* why -- and Shelby found it and he won't give it back, and now he's got mom doing stuff, so that's why I broke in, but I found -- I thought I found -- this Asian girl, locked in the basement. And I couldn't get her out of there, I told her I'd come back and get her..."

And when Dylan says he'll help Norman, without asking a single question, he means something very different than what Norman hears. He doesn't ask for trust, but he gets it ("Thank you," Norman says formally): The thing is that this story gets worse the less true it is. It would be less awful, less depressing and terrifying, if it all really happened. If the sex slave is real, she can be freed. She can be saved. But if she isn't, then Norman has no such hope.

BRADLEY

Dylan's relieved. About Norman finally giving him something, of course, and about having an even better way of saving him than groceries he paid for as a drug merc, but most of all by the fact that Bradley chooses this moment to text Norman ("Hey."). Because there aren't any other words to say, at this point. Norman's said them all.

Dylan: "Is that a girl? Is she pretty? Do you like her? You have to text her, right now, and say you're coming over."

Norman: "What?"

Dylan: "If she says no, no big. But nobody texts you at ten PM unless it's situation-dependent. This is a booty call. You must go forth."

Norman: "...Send. Oh, shit."

Dylan waits. Drinking it in, like a fifth of whiskey, because who knows when he'll get this chance again. Everybody runs.

Norman: "...And she's asking me to come over. What is this?"

Dylan: "I got laid when I was twelve..."

Norman: "That's sad. That isn't a happy story."

Dylan: "-- But it means I'm right about everything. Go. Now. The best antidote to being involved in a sex slave rape murder is to remember that you are seventeen, and your other girlfriend is on her deathbed being boring, so go. Dumbass."

They feint, they smile, they can't look into each other's eyes. They don't touch.

MARTIN HOUSE

Norman: "Where's *your* Mother? Making turkey pot pies? I keep mine in the parlor, or sometimes her room. Eventually the basement, spoiler alert."

Bradley: "...Sedated. Come upstairs."

(Ohhh, the Widow Martin. What on earth will she be? I hope she is a *Real Housewives Of Beverly Hills* amount of trouble, don't you? Specifically *BH*, nothing else will do. And what will it be like, when the moms are a thing? They're bonding over dead dads now, but they've also both come to live in Mother country. And actually, on that note, where's Emma's mom? She seems to parallel the opposite way... Her dad's just as protective as Norma is, but we can assume he'll eventually become a mentor... Hmm, hope Emma's around for that part, the part where Norman goes looking for an older man to play that role. Frankly, I hope Emma outlasts *all* these sons of bitches, but that seems unlikely I guess.)

Norman sits on the bed; waits to be asked. He removes his shoes, which is a weirdly intimate move but also 100 percent Norman Bates and plus, you know, his ankle. Bradley seems, um, a little "sedated" herself. She gives such a Lisbon Girl vibe, who knows.

"We felt the imprisonment of being a girl, the way it made your mind active and dreamy, and how you ended up knowing which colors went together. We knew that the girls were our twins, that we all existed in space like animals with identical skins, and that they knew everything about us though we couldn't fathom them at all..."

Bradley: "Thank you for ... helping me so much. I'm just tired of being sad. I want to feel something else for a little while. D'you think I'm weird?"

Norman: "No. I don't think you're weird."

Bradley: "Thank you, Norman."

What she means is *trust me*. She takes him by the hand.

Norman: "It's my pleasure."

They make love, under Verona sheets. Like ghosts in a house where nobody lives. His smile is a still lake, in a world of concrete. They feel something else. For a little while, they feel something other than sad.

"...We knew, finally, that the girls were really women in disguise, that they understood love and even death, and that our job was merely to create the noise that seemed to fascinate them."

His hands on her body could belong to a man.

LATER

It's two AM when Norma wakes up on her bed, still in the clothes she was wearing when she lost it, tearing down the walls. She goes looking for her son, of course; she finds someone else entirely.

Dylan: "Am I my brother's keeper? He's out. With a girl."

Norma: "The fuck you say?"

Dylan: "He's a seventeen-year-old boy who is out of the house, with a girl he likes. And I hope to God he's getting laid, because he deserves it. For putting up with your crazy ass..."

Norma: "My ass? For putting up with *my* ass?"

("In the end, the tortures tearing the Lisbon girls pointed to a simple reasoned refusal to accept the world as it was handed down to them, so full of flaws...")

She attacks him, but I wonder who her hands are really hitting. Bradley never registered, she's exactly the kind of vague, dangerous beauty Norma's been warning him about. Another fence too high to climb and too steely to pull down. Which leaves Emma, the dying girl. Is he out with a dying girl, getting laid?

Norma: "How *dare*, you don't know anything about me and Norman, you're a foreign element. We two are *defined* by excluding you, you can't..."

Dylan: "And yet. Yet, maybe I've gotten to him. But I know he sees the cracks."

Norma: "Norman would *never* say anything bad about me."

Dylan: "Not if he knew he was, no. But he said fuckin' plenty. Enough to get him out of this house, if need be..."

Norma: "*Nobody is taking him away from me.*"

Dylan: "Uh, that girl is! As we speak!"

He holds so still, against her onslaught. Eventually, to stop her from hurting either of them Dylan backs her up against the wall, hands on her wrists, up above her head. The scariest possible physical position, when they're stronger than you. And she howls, and she resists, but then suddenly, instead of panicking, she goes limp. They just fall into each other, exhausted. It's not sexual but it is very intimate, it is bodies that have known each other for a very long time.

This -- with the violence, the consent to control of her own body, the arms above the head -- is maybe the most striking image yet, of the whole thing. It fires so many synapses, so many *wrong* associations, that it just kind of shuts the whole thing down and you see what you are looking at: Two wild animals, two worn-out boxers after an epic bout, wavering in a mutual TKO, holding onto each other so they don't fall down. She rests her head on his neck; they aren't embracing, but this is the same thing. It is very sad and it is very weird and very violent, and it is very, very tender. She went to sleep screaming, she woke up the same way. With a monster in the house.

ONE THING I DO NOT RECOMMEND IS

Seeing the film *Beloved* with your mother. It is harrowing anyway. But I didn't see any of it coming. It came out at the worst time between us, actually; we were going on dates because we couldn't stand to live together and we couldn't stand to look at each other, but we couldn't stand to be apart either. And we got in the car after, shaken separately and together, and stared straight ahead.

"Sometimes when it gets too dangerous, a mother rabbit doesn't know what to do. And for whatever evolutionary reason, to save them from what's coming, sometimes she'll eat her children. It's a rabbit, she probably doesn't think about it too much, but that's the instinct. To save her babies from what's happening next."

And then she looked me in the eye, not crying but not entirely dry-eyed either, not smiling but not asking for anything either. "I thought about it."

Things were better after that. And I don't know how to explain why, but maybe you know what I'm talking about. I don't think we've fought since that day. I had a worse childhood than some but not most, just generally speaking, which is why I don't really talk about it because it's not that interesting or relevant, and I got in my own way a lot, and there was a lot of Dylan in my growing-up, and I am still trying to grow up. But things were so, so much better after that. What a relief. I don't think I've ever been so proud.

And so somewhere in the middle of this moment, this frightening and intimate and violent and gentle moment, you can see how it calms her. It's not a taming, she can't be tame, but it goes through her like a slap, like sparks, and then they can just be there, without Norman in the middle, without the house being about Norman and the family being about Norman, and just be two people that have known each other a very long time, and can't stand to look at each other, and can't stand to be apart.

Which is every son's story, and every mother's too. Because every time he calls her a whore, he is begging to be loved, to be forgiven his trespasses, forgiven for being a man; and every time she says she hates him, *hates* the man she made, what she means is *I love you, horribly*.

What she means is it's the hardest thing of all, to let go of someone you love. And yet somehow we do, sometimes. Even when your body says otherwise. In the absence of Norman, they flow toward each other like water, like beasts. And that's the silence the doorbell drops into; that's the situation Zach Shelby drops into, when Romero arrives to arrest Norma Louise Bates for the murder of Keith Summers.

NEXT WEEK

Midpoint of the season means big events. Norma and Shelby have to deal with their dating situation, like any couple where one of them is a cop and the other one is a murderess. After much waiting around and neurosis, Norman'll have to make amends for abandoning her in like, a thousand ways, while dealing with the fallout of losing his V to somebody who doesn't love him. Emma helps him follow up on their mystery, Norma's lawyer is fully crushworthy, and hopefully Dylan steps up, because it looks like we're going to have some very broken pieces of people on our hands.

Ocean View, 105

"Whip-Smart"

PREVIOUSLY

Dylan made a friend at the strip club, Ethan, who -- when he's not setting people on fire in the name of frontier justice and/or shooting people and breaking their legs for his drug dealer bosses -- seems to be very focused on family values and all-around charitable behavior. Dylan finally figured out a way to reach out to Norman in a way that did not scare him off, which was lovely and which eventually contributed to getting Norman laid over at

mysterious Bradley's house. Norma got arrested for the murder of Keith Summers, thankfully in a way that was not Norman's fault, but unfortunately she still does not believe in his hallucinations (?) about her boyfriend's sex prisoners.

BRADLEY'S HOUSE

Norman takes in sleepy Bradley for a while, feeling on fire in his new skin. He thinks about touching her hair and decides not, probably because of her creepy pantyhose bodysuit she's wearing for reasons of modesty that is distractingly sparkling in the morning light like he just accidentally boned a member of the Cullen family of vampires that lives a mere six-hour drive up the coast.

He walks home, feeling well chuffed, and keeps giggling to himself and remembering how: Sex.

HOME

Dylan: "Hey, buddy. Spring in your step there, I see."

Norman, awkwardly: "Tee hee."

ibid., immediately: "...Where is Mother?"

Dylan: "She is, um, in jail."

JAIL

Boys: "How's it going, Norma?"

Norma: "How it's going is, I am a rat in a cage. Despite all my rage. I can't even be looking at you right now."

Dylan: "Why are you pissed at *me*?"

Norma: "I am *always* pissed at you."

Dylan: "Fair enough."

Norman: "What about me, Mother?"

Norma: "You, I can't talk about it because it will fuck you up, so I'll just growl."

"I'm glad you want to help, *Norman*. Really, it's *big* of you. Any mother would be broken in *half* by such devotion."

He really is astounded and confused, like, what if your left knee or your right elbow started talking trash and acting like a scary mother you dream about, for no reason at all? Could she smell it on him and that's what she's trying to take away? Is this about the belt? Does she have him wrapped up with that night in his mind, like he does with her?

Boys: "We are going to save you and post bail, okay?"

Norma: "You don't seem to understand that just having you there looking at me in this cell is the most shameful, horrible, repulsive thing that has happened to me in my life. Do you not get that? I am embarrassed to the point of blood coming out of my eyes, like, that word doesn't even apply anymore. It is the next Pokémon of that word."

Boys: "Well, don't let the bastards grind you down, lady."

Norma: "GET OUT!"

Boys: "Honestly right now we could not be acting more supportive or delightful."

Norma: "THAT IS WHY GET OUT! Are you RETARDED?"

She sat in this place all night, like Gollum, petting her rage like a rat: What if your left knee or your right elbow disappeared when you needed it the most? All night long, just stewing in it. All the thing she was going to say, all the pissed-off subtleties and jabs and barbs, and all the time, ringing in her ears: "We're taking Norman away from

you. It's already happening and you didn't even notice it." She's been alone before, but this night was the loneliest of her life.

Dylan: "Ugh. I knew I was asking for it, but you are pulling a fucked routine on this kid."

Norma: "Who put me in here? You. You and your sick gross world. And then you stuck him out there in it to get his dick wet? Ever notice how every time he leaves the house, something truly terrible happens to me? Do you think that is a *coincidence*?"

Dylan: "No, you're being totally rational right now. Obviously. Dylan *out*."

Norman: "Seriously Mom, let's just work this out."

His pretty, sad face is too much, so she turns to the wall. He'll go away eventually.

BATES MOTEL

Norman's tearing through the motel files, looking for the deed, when Emma finds him. She *dings* the bell, cutely, and he's glad to see she's okay. Not terribly interested -- we're on a mission right now, the most important mission of his life -- but glad just the same. Even if she were Bradley, he'd still be after that paper: It's Mother.

Emma: "So how's it going with that whole murder arrest and everything?"

Norman: "How did you find this out so fast? I literally just learned this info."

Emma: "Welcome to the WPB, bitch. Do you want to come stay with us?"

Norman: "Dylan's got some kind of *Party of Five* boner going so I guess I'll stick it out here. But thanks."

Emma: "Oh right, I forgot about that guy. Anyway, about these sex slaves..."

Norman: "-- Shut up, I found it. I found it!"

Emma: "Let me give you a ride to the bail bondsman, my rude little princess."

POT FIELDS

Dylan: "Major drug distributors are all about cash advances on your second week of work, right?"

Ethan: "No, but if they did how much would you want? Just curious."

Dylan: "I would say five grand, all told. My mother is melting down and taking all of us with her, and I thought this would be a convenient time to kidnap her son. Never mind."

Ethan: "I don't want to end up crying in a strip club about your family dynamic."

JAIL

Shelby: "So hi..."

Norma: "GTFO."

Shelby: "At least eat your jail food."

Norma: "Fuck your jail food."

Shelby: "Funny how all the men you're taking this out on are the ones you let into your life in the first place because they don't qualify as men to you."

Norma: "I have circled my one wagon."

Shelby: "Rock on, Antigone."

BAIL PLACE

Norman: "Thank you for driving, now you can get lost."

Emma: "A true friend sticks it through to the end, Norman. If you can't count on your child friends to help you bail your grown-ass mother out of jail for murder..."

Norman: "I guess the bail bondsman's 24/7 sign is a lie, because he's not here. So more of a 23.75/7."

Emma: "Then I'll hang around and wait to pounce on your face with a hundred kisses."

Norman: "Just don't get curious about all this, okay?"

Emma: "Norman, I have something to say. *I am very curious about all this.*"

Norman: "Instead, here's a shiny object called a sex slave conversation. Update, I found her in a cop's basement."

Emma: "*A police conspiracy!* We gotta blow the roof off this shit, my friend..."

Norman: "-- Instead, we will not. And I can't tell you why. And when you ask me questions about it, it makes me uncomfortable."

Emma: "Sorry about that, lady, but you just told me a cop has a sex slave in his basement. That is very interesting."

Norman: "Stay frosty, Sodapop. Jiao's been downgraded to second-most important prisoner of the cops for today."

Emma: "But so how did you find this out?"

Norman: "Not important."

Emma: "And how can we save her?"

Norman: "Not a priority."

Emma: "But how come?"

Norman: "You are not allowed to ask questions. There is no further clarification available at this time. Stop hyperventilating, you have cystic fibrosis."

(What he says is, "You're freaking out all over Italy!" but the Google on that is just people wondering why the hell he said that, not what the reference actually is. When in doubt, I usually just say it's a line from *The Big Lebowski* because odds on it is, but given Norman's cineaste tendencies, I'd say that is too recent, so I'm going to say it's from a 1965 Montgomery Clift movie about a Zen bowler who freaks out all over Italy called *How Green Was My Chifforobe*.)

Emma: "How about some adorable kissing?"

Norman: "Mother is all that is going on right now. Not you, not Bradley, not Jiao. Also, the kissing is weird for secret other reasons on top of the usual weird reasons."

Emma: "Hey, did your mom actually kill Keith Summers? That guy was the worst! I would actually be really impressed if..."

Norman: "She most certainly did not. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a date with a bail bondsman."

One thing that has been interesting to track has been Norma's habit -- and increasingly Norman's -- of just outright rejecting consensus reality and substituting her own. In one way it's a crazy person thing to do, but it's also how shit gets done.

Hester Prynne the actual character -- not our cultural gloss on the character -- is a dignified religious hermit who knows exactly what she's doing, living out in the wilderness with her feral child and rejects at every point the inclusive gestures of the townspeople, because she knows about the hidden costs (and knives) that come with them. She's one of my heroes, because she knows what she knows and she sticks to her convictions, and they don't come from anywhere except herself and her relationship with God: By removing herself from the context, she can diagnose the context better than anybody who stayed, who hates or fears her and she is correct about them.

And when you think about revolutions, about the suffragettes and bloodier ones, the thing that keeps cropping up is that in order to change anything, you have to be *super weird*. You have to exist outside the context to understand the context, but then you also take a giant step toward crazy when you decide to affect that context. I can't think of a person -- or at least an act -- that's been really pivotal in America's social history that wasn't absolutely balls-out crazy: Rosa Parks wasn't *having it*, Shulamith Firestone wasn't *having it*. That's the beauty of the breakdown and we have to catch those people once they're all burnt up and fall back to earth.

And what's more, people who successfully mediated both worlds -- the internal and the external -- seem uniformly left behind even when they contribute greatly: Gloria Steinem, who saved the world and created the one we live in, is barely a footnote to the new bunch. Which is gross, but supports the point: To create change, you have to be willing to be sacrificed to that change and that's super sad, but it's a closed sum. Martyrs are lunatics, because *you would have to be*. You never have a place in the Utopia you are creating.

And it all starts here: With the irresistible force finally meeting the immovable object. Norma can run the Bates Motel, she said, *because she said so*. And when Norman reminded her last week of her out-clause, she wouldn't take that either: Her most Antigone moment was outside that city dump when she clarified what happened for him, in the most determinedly Hester Prynne way: It was *not* self-defense, and she won't take the easy way out, because what is going on inside Norma Bates is *always* more important than what the real world is up to, which is a universal quality of saints (and of) crazy people: She killed the *shit* out of him and it was glorious.

But some objects are immovable. So now that you're in the cage, what do you do? Admitting things are past the point of no return is not an option, because that retroactively destroys your entire deal. Acknowledging the easy way out would dissolve it just as much. It's not that she's doubling down or entrenching -- and even now, separated from her, Norman too -- so much as she is hardening into diamond.

The what of her innocence is more important than the how -- or the why -- and either way she can't talk about it because of what engendered it: When Keith laughed at her for getting raped, he upset the balance of the universe, and he needed to die. To call this self-defense would tip it back over, because it means he's right: He got her. They won. Her penetration of Keith Summers becomes a pale shadow of his penetration of her, and all the trouble it created; it becomes useless, tit for tat, just another woman striking back at a world that will continue to laugh at her.

She wasn't just turning a rape into a murder: She was *turning rape into murder*. It wasn't self-defense, it was *self-preservation*.

NIGHT

Norman texts Bradley -- off the same text chain as last week's "I'm outside your house" -- and gets no response. While he remembers what it was like, he gets a text and grins, but it's not Bradley, Bradley's nowhere: Norma's bail is posted and she'll be out come morning. Which is nice, but tough for a gear-switch: The two women his body now knows best are both hidden and we have no way of what's going on with them, and Norman can't be blamed for still, 23.75 hours later, being consumed with both of those black box mysteries or overlooking old Emma altogether.

EXT. JAILHOUSE - 9AM SHARP

He's got his big-boy clothes on and a bouquet of flowers, when she appears, but Norma just breezes past him.

Norman: "Did you see the flowers?"

Norma: "Yeah, great."

Norman: "I brought cab fare..."

Norma: "Go for it. I'm walkin'. Nothing to say to you."

He knows, we know, this isn't the first time Norma's pulled this particular routine. You need a hard reset sometimes. She doesn't know she's doing it, but this is right out of the playbook: Alienation, abandonment, until he's in just enough pain that he comes back to the fold. There's something tired in them, as they fall into those roles, but the point is made: Flowers ain't gonna do it.

And frankly, nothing is going to do it while she's still stuck in this between-place, because he has changed shape: From something she can count on to something that doesn't exist. And they can't focus on the hassle of the ceremony that will change him back until this latest earthquake settles down.

REBECCA CRAIG, ESQ

Is played by one of my favorite actors, Lara Gilchrist -- who played my *very* favorite **Gaius Girl**, if you're playing Vancouver Bingo -- and she is awesomely dealing with Norma's crazy the next morning.

Norman: "Are you ever going to look at me, Mother?"

She hilariously turns a dead-eyed stare on him for a count of four and then goes back to ignoring him. But she did bring him along, so it's mostly for show at this point.

Craig: "So Keith Summers, huh? Well, we all knew he would be harassing you for buying his..."

Norma: "Nope."

Craig: "...Which is why his truck was so close to your property..."

Norma: "-- How old are you?"

Craig: "33? Grown up? Anyway, maybe he's sabotaging you so you won't be a success at what he..."

Norma: "Not exactly, but too close to the truth. Tell me, what is your aim here? You're establishing a narrative that..."

Craig: "That gets you out of a murder charge, lady. This is your defense. Work with me."

Norma: "I don't need a defense! My defense is, crazily, I didn't do it!"

Craig: "Listen, you need to understand how the law works. This is basic shit. I don't care if you did it or not. This is about innocence of the charge of murder."

Norma: "And guilt for the charge of being raped. No dice."

As Norman sneaks some desk candy, to Rebecca's sweet, encouraging smile, Norma makes a good point that carpet fibers don't actually prove anything considering he owned the motel for 40 years, but then demands to run her own DNA test on the fibers. It almost makes Rebecca laugh but -- as we'll see later -- also makes her think.

Rebecca: "Norma..."

Norma: "Rebecca. I'm not going to walk into a court of law and say that I did it in self-defense just to make your job easier. I didn't do it!"

She stalks out, Norman making apologies all the way out.

ON THE DRIVE HOME

Norman's point -- once she glares him into speaking it -- is that she is not only acting crazy erratic, but also that she's lying about something she doesn't need to lie about. But all she sees is that belt under the bed, when he speaks: He doesn't get to have an opinion about this, whatever he got up to with whatever girl, because as much as he has churned the whole nightmarish experience into one big murderous sex anticathexis free-for-all* in his head, you can't forget she's doing the same thing:

The belt thing added Norman (and Shelby, although with Shelby she can discharge it in other ways) to the factors in the ongoing monster that's chasing her now. Norman becomes the observer, the audience: Without him watching, the only man involved would have stayed Keith, who is dead.

*(I didn't notice, but an eagle-eyed poster did, that in his blackout S&M fantasy with Miss Watson, at one point she gets turned over on her face, bound -- just like Norma -- and then *turns into* Norma, for a moment. I mean, it's there to be assumed, but the fact is there's a frame where it's true.)

I point this out, first and foremost, because I need you to think I'm a smartypants, but mostly because it still stings to see people calling that first night "unearned" or "exploitative," when in fact it's still the prime mover for everything that is going on: Everybody deals with their violation in different ways, and this is still -- halfway through the season -- about Norma doing just that. I've been putting emphasis on the woman world/man world part because that's the part that affects most of her actions and the rest of the characters, but when we talk about Keith Summers or the murder we are only ever talking about this: Him coming back from the grave to get his revenge, by winning. Putting that violation back on top, after she risked her soul to erase it.

Norman: "You're not doing anything to help yourself, they have evidence..."

Norma: "What difference does it make to you, anyway? You don't care about me. You went out and you got *laid* that night that I was crying in my room, worried sick about all of this, about what could happen, about me being taken away from you and put in jail..."

Norman stupidly invokes Dylan's name, in some awkward blame-shifting moment, and *that* fucks her up but good.

Norma: "Oh, there's a surprise. Who was it? ...Fine, don't tell me. I don't want to know anyway. This is all Dylan's fault."

Norman: "He's just worried about..."

Norma: "He's trying to turn you against me."

Norman: "Fuck that. Nobody can do that."

Norma: "*You told him everything*. You don't see from where you're sitting the betrayal that represents, because it's barely something you can put into words, but trust me, you are doing yourself no favors acting like he's a real person, like you and me."

Norman: "You do things that *don't make sense*, Mom, you *scare* me. I'm scared *all the time*. Like maybe you need some help."

Norma: "*I* need help? I scare *you*?"

She laughs and you laugh with her, because even if you aren't tracking the ways she, and now Dylan, cover up for Norman's insane behavior, you still know where this goes. She *does* need help. And *he should* scare her. But Norman can't know -- wouldn't hear, if she said it explicitly -- how much of his burdens she's carrying for him. So this expression of care becomes... what, entitled? Offensive? Like she's the monster in the house, like the monsters aren't outside the house. So she throws him out of the car.

How she does this is hilarious: He doesn't go easy, so she jumps out of the car and trip-trops around it in her heels -- looking *tremendously*, fence-crawlingly insane -- and opens his door for him, then once he's out she trip-trops back around and gets in and drives off. Maybe you have not had this happen to you, but if you have you would really appreciate the awkward silliness of her physical performance here. The surreality it creates, for you and for Norman both.

OF COURSE

It's just a matter of moments before Racer X shows up on his motorcycle, worried about Norman -- still in his Sunday suit, looking absolutely flummoxed -- and then grimly impressed by the drama. It's a double-dutch and Dylan just keeps trying to jump in.

Dylan: "Welcome to the doghouse. Hop on."

You want Norman to throw his arms around Dylan, like a sloth on its mommy's back, once he has his cute little helmet. You want gawky Norman to make tiny Dylan look gigantic. You want them to laugh, cutting back and forth on the drive home. You want Norman's eyes to widen with pleasure, deliriously happy, as they take the curves and gun the straightaways, all the way home. And that's what you get. They've never looked so happy. The world has never seemed so kind or so bright.

And even then, even as it's happening, you can see Dylan wanting it to be like this forever. Norman too, but the second that engine cuts off he'll drop out of the dream: This is Dylan's dream and for the moment you can see how he believes in it. Regardless of how immovable the world remains, how irresistible the forces allied against them, you can see how bright this impulsive hope actually burns. They are suddenly a family.

BACK IN HER HOUSE

Dylan: "So but then why did you actually get out?"

Norman: "She said 'get out.' I mean she could not have been clearer."

Dylan: "She's been saying that shit since I *got* here, it doesn't mean anything. Drama doesn't deserve a response."

Norman: "The only rule of life is that what Norma says becomes reality. Reliably this has proven true."

Dylan: "Her words, coming out of your mouth."

Norman: "She's objectively going through a lot."

Dylan: "Thing is, she always will be. She's like an addict and the only thing you can do -- the kind thing, for both of you; the thing that changes the situation -- is walking away."

Norman: "Walking away how? Like you did? Because look where you're sitting."

Dylan: "It's still emotionally true. Everybody cuts the cord, Norman. It's the way of things. We leave our parents to become adults. There is literally no other way for that to work."

Dylan: "Speaking of, I'm getting my own place. Down by the beach. An ocean view."

Norman: "I am of two minds about that."

Dylan: "If she goes to jail, you're coming with me."

Norman: "Am I?"

Dylan: "And even if she doesn't, I still want you to. All three of us can still be salvaged, but you have to be..."

Norman: "She can't do this without me."

Dylan: "This thing and then the next thing and then the next. That's not a reason."

Norman: "She's my *mom*."

Dylan: "This definition for that word you two have cooked up, it is not the actual definition. You are not using that word correctly, for what she is. Because there isn't a word for what she is. Which is why we run."

Norman swallows; if Dylan were just turning him against her -- if being a man is contagious -- this isn't how he would do it. But whatever he's trying to do, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense either.

ETHAN

Hands Dylan a bag lunch on the way back to the truck, while they go on mob-heavy rounds. Once inside, he hungrily digs in: But it's not a bagel, it's five grand.

Dylan: "I thought you said there are no advances in our ill-defined thug trade?"

Ethan: "That is from me. I know you're good for it, you've made me look good for bringing you in and you're cool."

Weird Junkie: (*Approaches, shambling.*)

Ethan: "Shit, this loser. Hide that huge bag of money."

Junkie: "Uh, hey Ethan."

Ethan: "Is your shit in order yet? Because he's been bugging me to come break your legs or something..."

Junkie: "Oh, my shit is in order."

Just when you're digesting the fact that "they" is actually in some way a "he" -- Romero? It would fit the man world/woman world model for sure -- the junkie shoots Ethan clean through the neck. It's awful sad, watching Dylan beg him to keep pressure on the wound while he drives Ethan's truck to the hospital, screaming in terror and then... Duck back out, once he realizes that he doesn't even know Ethan's last name and that they are both enforcers for the Mob and he should get his bounce going.

RIP, Chuckles. You were a sweetheart, and you have the greatest **IMdB headshot** of all time. See you... I'm guessing moments from now, when we next play Vancouver Bingo.

TRYSTING

Norma: "I have come to meet you, once again, at your request. This time, apparently, we needed to meet in a steaming haunted graveyard."

Shelby: "It is to mourn our love while we back-burner our affair. I just wanted to say that I'm sorry I had to be there when you got arrested -- that was awkward. And also that your horrible behavior in the jailhouse has done the trick and I am now totally in love with you."

Norma: "Whatever, dude."

Shelby: "No, I mean really. We need to cool it on our already-secret love affair, but on the whole I am ready to risk my entire career and life in this town to tamper with your evidence."

Norma: "That will be satisfactory."

WPB PD

Shelby: "Hey, Regina, our distractingly beautiful dispatcher. Could you help me with some basic shit? I'm just your average bumbling hot white guy, playing the Homer Simpson card..."

Regina: "I've been conditioned by culture to indulge this act and will be leaving to get you that paperwork just long enough for you to rewire the station's internal cameras, sneak the evidence room key out of Romero's desk, steal the carpet sample and bumble your ass back out here."

Shelby: "Thanks!"

MEANWHILE

Dylan finds the junkie that killed Ethan and runs him the fuck over. But not before stalking him through the streets and then *vrooming* toward him, in a very scary and suspenseful sequence, to the point that when the junkie kid ends up a thin jelly on the road. You're kind of shocked it really happened but moreso relieved that it's over.

Presumably then Dylan goes to a strip club to cry for a while.

LADIES ON COMPUTERS

While Emma connects the dots from Shelby's disappearing sex slave back to Keith Summers and then to Keith Summers's boat where Shelby may have stashed his sex slave before Norma slept over, Norma's at the motel poking a bruise: the Bates Motel website includes a picture of the two of them, Norma and Norman, in happier days: "The Team," it's brightly titled. Ironic and sad, but also kind of like she's stalking him on Facebook. *Ring ring!*

Craig: "Mrs. Bates? It's Rebecca Craig. I am delightful."

Norma: "Damn, I was hoping it was Norman. Or really anybody but you."

Craig: "Not so fast, crazy. Your case just got thrown out. I was going to request a separate DNA test on the carpet fibers but they..."

Norma: "Are you kidding? He got rid of the evidence *that* fasssss... I mean, thank you for this information and it was nice meeting you and haranguing you in your office."

UP THE HILL

Norman sits on the stairs, leaving the still-MIA Bradley a sweet voicemail that is, sadly, too awkward for me to even revisit. It's simply too real. Whatever you're imagining, it's easily four times as bad, because it's ol' Norman. Oh, honey. This kid, he just kills me.

BUT THEN

Norma throws open the door, shining bright as the sun.

"They lost the evidence! It is over! They threw the whole thing out!"

Norman: "Nice to see you and all, but..."

Norma: "I am done being mad at you! But I am not going to apologize!"

Norman: "Life can be beautiful. It's like a beautiful miracle..."

Norma: "Well, more like a beautiful deputy, but..."

Norman: "Aw, fuck. For real? For this one he gets in the backdoor, I bet."

Norma: "Let's not get lost in details, Norman."

Norman stomps the fuck out, because now the whole iceberg is closing up tighter around them all, the sex and the girl nobody believes in but him. So when Emma pulls up, as just the right moment once again, he hops in with barely a word: "Take me somewhere. I want to get out of here." No matter what Emma has to tell him, what she's discovered, in that moment -- maybe this is just me -- but in that moment he sounds classically like a girl in trouble, bad date or mean dad trouble: "Just get me out of here."

Which made me wonder if that isn't also Emma's role. Dylan is the king, not the savior prince: He knows what the world looks like from high above and won't be listened to no matter how clearly he explains it. And in the show's violent reversals, Norman's the princess, *the Rapunzel*, with Norma's whole story written in his big blue eyes. And then you have Emma, ridin' up on her horse. I don't know, I think there's a *lot* to this Rapunzel thing, come to think of it. Emma and Bradley both just keep climbing that wall.

THE DOCKS

He doesn't want to talk about it, of course, so she lets him flip out and finally he changes the subject to Jiao.

Emma: "You're in upheaval, I thought it would be rude to just launch..."

Norman: "Girl. Go."

Emma: "Heh, okay. I was like, *Okay if I had an Asian sex slave, where would I hide her?* Right? And then so I was wondering if Summers had a cabin somewhere maybe or a lake house, but Google said no. But then wouldn't Shelby know about-slash-be involved with the business Summers was running out of the motel? And now that Summers is dead... why do you keep checking your phone?"

Norman: "Emma, I need to tell you that I am with Bradley now."

Emma: "Not to see desperate or anything, but no you aren't. You hooked up, yes?"

Norman: "I think possibly we are in love. Despite her telling me directly and in no uncertain terms that she was purely using me as a physical distraction from her crippling grief."

Emma: "Relationship status unchanged? Thought so. Hookup. Which is fine. We are quite modern here in the WPB, I ain't mad at ya."

Norman: "I am quite *not*-modern, here in my life, so I guess we can table this while I feel sorry for you."

Emma: "You do whatever you want, lady. But I want to search Keith Summers's boat."

THE SEAFAIRER

Yep, same name as the motel used to have, because Keith Summers was gross but also an idiot.

Emma: "Hey, the worst thing that will happen is we'll fail. Or we'll get arrested for breaking and entering. Which is still not murder."

There's a lock on the outer door, which Emma smashes to fuck with her oxygen tank because she is *aboss* and then after a few disheartening search minutes, out pops Jiao from a locker, screamin' and clawin' and spittin' and generally doing what you would do if somebody doped you up on heroin and sold you to a bunch of people for sex and then locked you in a broom closet and then randos came to presumably torture you more. Eventually they get her in the car.

UNIT 11

I keep thinking the room numbers are going to matter but in this case I think it's only important because it's so far down from the motel office, which is going to matter in a minute.

Norman: "She keeps passing out and she has puke in her hair, so."

Emma: "I wonder what our endgame here is."

Norma, like the last 24 hours never happened, is acting totally normal and looking for her kid, but eventually when she sees Emma's car -- remember, she's been operating under the assumption that it's Emma who has hamburgled her son's virtue -- she gets all crazy again. She storms the room expecting to find heavy petting, and instead finds a barfing Chinese sex slave on the bed with them both. Needless to say, she is beside herself.

Norma: "Norman what the fuck?"

Emma: "Does she know?"

Norma: "Do I know *what*? To repeat

Norman: "Have a seat, Norma."

Norma: "I don't think I shall. I don't think I feel like sitting down in the middle of your vomit threesome."

Norman: "Oh my God, chill. This is just your boyfriend's sex slave."

Norma: "This again? How many times do I have to tell you, you hallucinated that."

Norman: "Um, did I hallucinate it *so hard* that she is sitting on and befouling this bed now?"

Jiao: "It's true. I was kept doped up and raped for months in your boyfriend's house."

Norma: "This is ludicrous!"

Norman: "Or is it awesome that I was totally right, and therefore not a crazy person?"

She stomps back to the office to find a recent newspaper story with a photo of two men, one of whom is Zach. Jiao confirms it, but not in a way where next week Norma couldn't just say she probably meant the other guy in the photo -- and for all we know, he could be a Grody Gus too, knowing this town. Finally Norma just sort of stands there, vibrating.

Which is the perfect thing to go out on, because nothing is more hilarious than watching somebody's mom -- and the central character of the best show of television -- nervously contemplating what to do with an Asian sex slave.

Best case scenario: Awkward conversation with your boyfriend. Mid-level: Breakup. Slightly worse: Breakup, and he goes to jail. Way worse: He gets into trouble for having a sex slave, but I go to jail for killing my rapist.

Absolute worst: Maybe this could *all* go away.

NEXT WEEK

All this does not go away. But now having confirmed that the brand-new love of her life is not opposed to keeping women -- besides her, which he already was -- in sexual slavery, Norma has some choices to make, some yelling to do and crazy driving stunts to pull with Norman in the car. Meanwhile I can't imagine that Norman is going to feel super great about being right this whole time, once the newness of validation wears off. And if the pattern holds, Bradley reappears and Emma's gonna be gone again. Hopefully, Dylan can move up the ladder so we can get a look at more of the power players in town.

The Truth, 106

"Dear Zachary"

PREVIOUSLY

Deputy Shelby is, in many ways, the perfect man. Which is how they get you. Nobody's actually a villain in their own movie, and he told Norma Bates a lot of stuff they both wanted passionately to believe -- and he meant it -- but at the end of the day holding murder evidence over your girlfriend's head isn't too far off from keeping her locked up in your basement on heroin, and he had both. Norman and Emma, in solving these twinned mysteries, ended up unraveling everything, and presented one sex slave to the other in a cliffhanger that twisted everything upside down and can only have redoubled Norma's feelings about men, their world, and her place in it.

MOMENTS LATER

Emma: "So your mom is in a total fugue state now? Is this normal?"

Norman: "Generally I'm the one who blacks out. I guess we broke her."

Emma: "Must be pretty tough to find out the person you're in love with is a monster."

Norman: "Spoiler alert!"

Emma: "...Oh, there she goes."

Norma goes tearing off, hilariously as ever, and Norman chases her down. The walk to the office from Room 11 is a long one, we know that -- but this chase to the parking lot is impossibly long and impossibly scary, and after watching Norma seethe silently and unmovingly for a good five minutes, somewhat cathartic. At least she's *doing* something.

Once Norman makes it to her, though, it turns into a whole different crazy struggle, with her peeling out in the gravel and aiming herself like a weapon at Shelby; she locks the doors and Norman dives in -- all eleven gawky feet of him -- for a new and improved Norma Freakout. Now, nothing is as loveable and funny and scary as Norma flipping out, she's physically one of the funniest people in the world, so there are economies of scale in play: Is this funnier than the **King Kong fence-climb**? Is it funnier than the **trip-topping vehicular evac** from last week?

Maybe. It may be. But as they're doing donuts around the BATES MOTEL sign -- literal *donuts*, okay -- at least we have Emma to marvel at what we're watching, which makes the whole thing funnier but also more comforting: "Holy *shit*," she says, her passion for Norman and his entire situation growing exponentially with every revolution.

When he finally gets the keys away from her, he knows the words; it's like a magic spell: "You're not gonna just 'talk' to him, Mom. Let's be honest. He won't get away with it! He won't be one of those men who's always 'getting away with everything.' We will get him. He's a bad guy, a bad man, and I promise he will get got. But we have to do this the right way." The Norma way of doing things is not going to work this time, because it never works but especially not this time, so let me use the scant knowledge I've gleaned about the world of men to help you solve this. I'm your man on the inside.

GIL

Is finally here. He's the "he" that started out a "they," whom I figured would be Romero but it's actually Vincent Gale: **Chief Laird** from the Battlestar *Pegasus*, who played a significant and sad role in Felix's rebellion, and which I guess counts as Vancouver Bingo even though he's Scottish. He's the head of the drug ring, Ethan and Dylan's boss, and he's stiller than a snake.

Dylan: "So... Ethan got shot in the neck and I took him to the hospital. And then I ran away because I remembered we're drug traffickers."

Gil: "Would you recognize the guy? Because I have an idea..."

Dylan: "Way ahead of you, boss. I sort of went on a murderous rampage. But even scarier than usual on this show because I didn't black out. I was just very sad."

Gil: "That is awesome."

Dylan: "I just want to do a good job and prove my worth. It's my main thing on this show."

Gil: "I am very proud of you."

Dylan: "I never really had a dad."

Dylan's still crying -- for Ethan, for the yellow-crayon fears of having fucked up somehow, but mostly with gratitude and a particular kind of love that only men understand -- when Gil explains to him what to do with the truck: Take it up into the mountains and blow it the hell up.

When he's done, Ethan's replacement shows up: A rough-trade hottie (think Wolverine with medium-pirate hoop earrings) named Remo (Vancouver Bingo again, this time a main guy from the *DaVinci's Various Things* series of

serieses but who I only know from *The 4400*, which I barely remember except for how much I loved him in particular) who spits out a lot of nails about how young Dylan is before admitting that he's not Dylan's partner so much as his subordinate.

Which makes tremendous sense on this show, of all shows: Dylan's reward for being more murderously man than the regular men with tenure, just like Norma wouldn't have a motel if Summers hadn't fucked up at life.

RM 11

Norma checks on Jiao, whose track-marked arm is hanging over the side of the bed; she brings it up to her chest and covers the girl with a blanket, then leaves some snacks on the side table. These paired scenes are the first time you see her with girls, really, and she does have a softness about it, beyond whatever manipulations she's running. Norman was only ever half a daughter.

But there's also a definite mirror-effect in her eyes: Norman (and later Dylan) couldn't stop talking about how her relationship with Shelby was sexual slavery -- and I was appalled and Norma was appalled by that because it denied Norma's agency and oversimplified both her and Zach into sex cartoons -- but looking at this girl and feeling righteous rage on her behalf makes it okay, makes the parallel okay: When she looks at Jiao, "Beautiful," she looks on the outside how Norma feels on the inside. Beat to shit, used up, and most of all humiliated.

BACK UP THE HILL

Emma: "So we're going to the cops like immediately, yes?"

Norma: "Shhh. She's sleeeeeeeeeping."

Emma: "Wake her junkie ass up, I am tired of having no closure on this."

Norma: "I appreciate that, honey, but how much good will she do us like this?"

Emma: "Two different problems. One, I want to go to the cops right now. Two, she is our main evidence of the Asian sex-slave ring because she is one. The remaining one."

Norman: "Good points, valid points. Allow my mother to hypnotize you like Kaa."

Norma sits on the couch with Emma, eyes whirling her into a false sense of complicity, and explains that the last thing you wanna do with a human slave is put them into stressful situations. Especially when they're coming down from a massive drug addiction. Next thing you know you've driven them right back into the arms of the dragon. Just let her sleep, and go away, and shut the fuck up and don't tell anybody, and you are a very pretty girl with a well-developed moral sense, and all of these things give you value.

BACK DOWN THE HILL

Norma: "Now, are you good to drive? The fuck on out of here?"

Emma: "I guess so."

Norma: "Should I call your mom and tell her you're on your way, so you don't accidentally blow my spot and get me thrown in jail for murder?"

Emma: "I don't have a mom. It's just me and Quirrell and a bunch of dead animals."

Norma: "That is very sad. You are very sad. You are dying."

Emma: "Yeah, I guess my mom couldn't handle it?"

Norma: "That sucks! It's *my* favorite thing *about* you, for what it's worth."

Emma jumps on her, for no reason other than Norma is being sweet and has the charisma of a cult leader, and because for a second Norma's narcissism parted to let a little empathy through, and because she's having a tough fucking day, and because her aim is to have Norma on her side as her future mother-in-law.

And again, you have this moment of Farmiga magic where Norma is first totally grossed out that somebody is hugging her, and then realizing that she better make this work because their entire futures right now depend on giving Emma a false sense of inclusion and achievement, and then... She relaxes into it. Wraps her arms around the tiny girl, and just hugs the shit out of her. Even Norman is amazed.

These two sad broken individuals who get to think Emma is the weaker one, who needs their love and their support, and you have Norman who honestly is just trying to do right by her -- even as wedding bells are going off in his crazy head with Bradley -- and then Norma who's like, "It's no skin off my ass. Ten years max, and then I get him back." And still, the very period at the end of the sentence is relief: Emma's a girl, a broken thing, which -- just like she only trusts men when they throw her up against the wall -- paradoxically makes her the only person from whom Norma Bates can accept comfort.

She hilariously hammers Emma into the car with a repeated mantra -- "We will, honey, we'll go to the cops tomorrow, tomorrow okay, tomorrow" -- and they see her off, and then the Bateses reconvene to watch her drive away.

Norman: "That was nothing short of amazing, what you did there. The real parts *and* the fake parts. You are a complicated, wonderful creature."

Norma: "My *ass* we're going to the cops. Where do you find these people?"

BEDRM

Norman: "Both because it's dangerous and because I am viciously jealous, I'm going to ask you not to tart yourself up and go back to Camp Shelby. You can't ever go back there."

Norma: "I'll swing by, try to avoid having humiliating sex if at all possible, or at least refrain from vomiting on him if that's what goes down, grab the belt, drop off a turkey pot pie, and then we'll fry his ass."

Norman: "Okay, Mata Hari, but your batting average is -- I'm just gonna say it -- low. How about you sneak me into his house while he's asleep?"

Norma: "Somehow that is the creepiest thing you've ever suggested. I can't even parse why, but it's very unhealthy for you to go there in your mind."

Norma: "Look. Occam's Razor and I apologize for not immediately believing you that my boyfriend was keeping a sex slave in his basement. I even went to go check, is how much I love you. And I guess you need to hear that I should have trusted you, even though that's *blatantly* false. Okay? Now let mommy get her face on."

Norman: "Distraction strategy two, deploy! Mommy, am I really crazy?"

Norma: "Stop being a drama queen. Sometimes people just say things, in the heat of the moment, to emotionally destroy each other -- and then it turns out they were just trying to get you to shut the fuck up."

Norman: "Because I'm starting to feel like maybe you are right and I am crazy."

Norma: "We can worry about that later -- meaning never -- but right now I need to focus on getting that belt."

Dylan, appearing: "You mean the one Norman hid under his bed after your brutal rape?"

Norma: "Oh, here we fuckin' go. This choad."

Norman: "Quick update, we have the sex slave downstairs, so I am not crazy."

Dylan: "Baby, you're still crazy. But that is a lot of new info."

Norman: "We found her on a boat."

Dylan: "Then that's where the belt is. Norma, you sit tight and please let your boys actually take care of you, like you spit blood out of your eyes about last week."

Oh, Dylan! Way to get it ten percent right for once in your...

Dylan: "And you can wipe that lipstick off."

...Well, you tried. First of all, I can already tell you that ten years from now I'll still be referring to Dylan Lastname as one of the all-time great characters of television. I just freakin' love him, I've never seen a character remotely like him. Maybe Matt Long's character on *Jack & Bobby*, that's the last time I loved a kid this much. All the MRA idiots in the world can't equal the social power of one fictional character who manages to get masculinity right. Or I guess if *Street and Riggins* had a baby it could conceivably turn out this way: Beautifully strong and damaged, hopeful and self-destructive, in exactly equal amounts.

But also, she stares in the mirror and starts to wipe off the lipstick because I don't know if I mentioned this, but Norma spends this episode 100 percent unspooled. It only gets worse, actually.

THE SEAFARIER

Dylan: "I have signed a lease on a two-bedroom bungalow."

Norman: "Well, that moved quickly."

Dylan: "It already was, but once the whore got outta jail I double-timed it. Plus I needed to get rid of my random wad of cash."

"Ocean views. No crazy people allowed. Just... Live life the way it's meant to be lived. Just peaceful and easy. Normal."

Norman: "Speaking of the opposite of that, what about Norma?"

Dylan: "You seem to have missed several important key factors of this plan."

Norman: "Yeah but what about Norma?"

Dylan: "You know how I'm awesome? That's because I broke away from my parents. It's also because of the specific parents."

Norman: "I follow you. But where will Norma sleep?"

They tromp all over the boat looking for the belt, and Dylan presses his case.

Dylan: "Like, did you know your father died?"

Norman: "That was a hell of a thing."

Dylan: "And you know how he was mentally and physically abusive?"

Norman: "Life is tough for everybody, Dylan."

Dylan: "First of all, I can't believe you're sticking up for *both* of them now, but more to the point, have you ever met Norma? Because she would totally kill a dude, and that goes double for dudes that keep her locked up in a cage."

Norman: "He was a handful. But I mean, it still wouldn't *really* be her fault."

True. I mean, "fault" is the wrong word, but I have this rule where nobody ever hits you twice. But also, check out this marvelously layered, ad-libbed-sounding sentence: "She wouldn't have killed my own dad!" Norman yells, which is not how you say that in English, but is *absolutely* how Norman would say it, on like three different levels. You can substitute any pronoun for any other pronoun and he's still saying several vital things: One, that he and Norma are a blended person, two, that Sam was in some ways their shared father/male authority/jailer, and three, that he killed Sam Bates and doesn't know it.

Dylan: "Okay, sure. Now that you're establishing a pattern where Norma kills dudes but only if they deserve it. But what about lying to you about it? Don't you feel crazy in your head, all the time, like something isn't lining up?"

Norman: "Bingo!"

Dylan: "Whoa, I actually got through to you?"

Norman: "Kind of, but I mean literally. Check out this rape belt we just found."

UP THE HILL

Bookending the end of the episode (and the character) nicely, when Norma sees the car drive up she thinks it's the boys, and because of the headlights backlighting him, for a long time she mistakes Shelby for his double. And by the time she can see him, it's well too late. He grabs her on the porch, hiking up her skirt, and -- while there's some more funny-Farmiga physicality to it -- suddenly the distance from Norma to Jiao is not so far at all. There's an Antebellum kind of rapeyness to it, this grand house and the rascal gent and her pushing him away weakly, like all that's missing is the fan in her hand.

And the whole time she's trying to make him stop without seeming to be doing so, tossing out rhetorical gambit after rhetorical gambit, she's also forced to make these little sighs and gasps because he's "turning her on" so much, and it's so gross, and it's like watching all of her stuff at the same time, but at least right now she is repulsed, solely, by his touch. I was afraid at this moment it would get complicated. I'm not entirely sure it doesn't, but for now she's not having it.

THE HARBOR

The Boys toss the belt into the Bay, and directly address the audience: "It's not a hand, it's not going to float. Nobody is ever going to see this belt again. The show is about to be something else. The belt is about to stop mattering. Don't worry about the belt, stop talking about the belt, this is a Shelby thing, and the show is about ten minutes from not being about Shelby anymore. It might still be about carpet fibers, but the sexual threat is no longer a major issue, and Romero is a different kind of storyline entirely. Plus we might get to see that cute attorney again, which would be nice."

Dylan, verbatim: "There. Now she's safe."

Norman, verbatim: "Thanks."

Dylan: "No prob, little man. Now let's go pack your shit."

Norman: "Oh, I thought that was like ... a metaphor? We're actually doing this?"

Dylan: "The great thing about you having zero ego to speak of is that marching orders actually work on you. I'm not Norma, but if we play this straight and she doesn't fuck it up, I can force you to move in with me just through willpower."

RM 4?

Actually I think it's Room 2, which thank God because that's the only thing that would make this grosser. I, ugh, I don't know about all this, unpacking all this. I'm not a woman, thank God, so a lot of this probably doesn't mean the same thing to me, but the visual is so intensely awful that you start filtering in the details one by one. Basically, Norma has opted for a fully-clothed rear entry, for at least one legit reason plus one terribly sad reason, so we start with the sound of the bed, and then it's a close-up of her face, mashed into a pillow, just repetitively shoving. And that's awful.

We've seen her in this posture before, and that's weird, because it reminds you that just because she's been sleeping with this guy doesn't mean it's not a violation *now*, or that retroactively it always was. And she's still making the creepy whines, which somehow makes it worse because there is not a lot of finesse in what Shelby's up to, back there.

But then on the other hand, you wouldn't be able to do it, if you were looking in his eyes, so that's pragmatic. That's something. And her eyes are trained on his gun, on the bedside table, which -- yes -- is strung on a belt of black leather, but also, she's stroking it the whole time. Just lightly, I guess stroking is the wrong word, she's running her fingers along the edge of an idea. Smith & Wesson has a way of shutting that whole thing down.

The possibility of ending this is almost as good as the actuality of ending this because either way she knows to play this cool until the Boys confirm she's out of danger. Not that you ever are. To his credit, I guess, Shelby realizes they're doing a creepy scene and asks why she suddenly has turned their lovemaking into kink -- and also why is she not into it since she made it up -- and Norma dumbly grasps at the first thing she (ever) thinks of: "I'm just worried about Norman?" Realizing that was weird -- even though it gives him the opportunity to play his usual "you are safe and free from all that in my arms" stuff -- she asks if they can start over and do it semi-normal, so he's happy because she's happy, and he focuses on the job at hand for a second, but then he hears Jiao taking a shower.

Never take a shower at the Bates Motel, are you kidding me? Do we really have to talk about this?

Anyway, Shelby puts his dick away and straps on his gun and heads out. And again, he's compartmentalized -- the genius thing about Shelby, the thing that makes him such a great character in this story, is that he's not either/or, he's both-all-the-time -- and goes right into "I'm the man who will protect you" mode. It's not fake, it's not even disingenuous. At this moment, he is worried that the woman he loves is outside a scary town where bad things happen, and some creep is dicking around in her empty property, and his job as the man who loves her is to find that person and save her from him.

He isn't a monster that keeps sex slaves in various kinds of bondage, exactly: He's a loving man with a dead mother of his own, who found a family he could slip into, readymade, and be the person he was always supposed to be. It's just that *also*, he keeps girls in basements and murder evidence in secret places because he has a certain kind of crazy that knows cages are harder to bust out of when they're invisible.

Nothing Norma hasn't seen before -- always a new twist on the old story, for her -- but in this case a rare combination of protection/invasion she's never seen before. Zach Shelby is a mutant, dark and light, just like her sons and just like herself. Is he the perfect man? Yes. Is he milk that curdled? Also yes. Does he need to be put down? Immediately. Will that be sad? Not to anybody on this show, rightfully, but I think so. Broken people without the chance of being healed are sad to me. Right under using manhood or sex as a weapon, in the list of sad things about sex, is when you end up shooting yourself with it.

Zach isn't just Dylan's double, he's Dylan without Norma. By which I mean, we'll never know how sick Dylan had the opportunity to become because the journey out of and away from Norma is what saved him. The things she gave him and the things he escaped, through the act of escaping them. Dylan doesn't try to hold onto people, like Norma does, like Norman will, like Zach pathologically does: He holds them gently, or not at all. And that's not a beautiful aspect of him because it's a lifetime of disappointment and bitterness that got him there, but it is an aspect of him that works, and makes him operate better than anybody else out of the four, in the real world.

Anyway, while I was writing a love letter to psychotic rapist Zach Shelby, he discovered Jiao -- much to Norma's unhelpful and suddenly crappy-at-lying surprise -- sent her screaming into the woods, bounced Norma off a couple walls, and ran off to murder his erstwhile property. So I guess their date is over. Frankly, I gotta say I'm relieved. It was not going well, tbh.

AFTER A YEAR OR SO

The Boys drive up, and because she's been acting so fucked up all day they don't really notice that she is for lack of a better word *propped* against the building, staring into space and feeling possibly more out of her mind than she has ever felt.

Dylan: "Belt's gone, you're safe, no thanks necessary but if you wanted to blink at some point in the near future I wouldn't mind that..."

Norman: "Are you back to being out of your mind again? We gotta check your blood sugar."

Norma: "Actually, I have some late-breaking..."

Dylan: "Hold that thought, Norma. Now that you're safe, I have something to discuss with you. No, not really discuss, more like... Okay, since you're just sitting there like a ghost, I guess I should just inform you without prelude that I'm kidnapping your child."

You can actually watch as Norma feels herself burying the lede. Like, mentally there's a cracking sound in her mind and she just puts a pin in her last half-hour of life: We are going to circle back around to the other main thing going on, for sure, but this is now the priority.

Norma: "The fuck you say?"

Norman: "I mean, nothing is definite..."

Dylan: "Come on, man! We rehearsed this!"

Norma: "Well, that's not fucking happening and I will fucking pull out every stop right here and now, because as I mentioned, that is not happening. I will take *all* you motherfuckers down with me first. But I *do* want to mention, just as a side note, that Zach Shelby showed up and pretty much just raped me by accident, beat me up a little bit in a brutal rage, and is now currently chasing an Asian sex slave through the woods to murder her. So now back to this whole bungalow situation..."

Seriously, I am not joking around. That's actually how she plays it. And the Boys immediately point out that -- belt aside, which is a good start -- they all three need to get the fuck on out of there because Shelby is coming back and he has a gun and a headstart, so unless Jiao does something *truly* remarkable -- which honestly I don't know the girl that well but she is operating at some disadvantage tonight -- like some kind of *Julie Of The Wolves/Home Alone*-type shit, he is about to...

Oh, hey Shelby.

UP THE HILL

After a nervous few minutes of what would have been a standoff if Shelby weren't totally aware of Dylan's whole deal and his job and his Remo and Ethan and everything, and thus demands his piece first thing, he marches them up the hill so things can get really awkward and scary in the formal dining room. (Not related, but have you ever seen the remake or the original of *Mother's Day*? I love both so much, but there's an especial lot of awesome shit going on in the 2010 one: Rebecca De Mornay, Jaime King, Patrick Flueger, Deborah Ann Woll, Shawn Ashmore, Kandyse McClure. It's like, ideal.)

Anyway, ol' Shelby's breakin' down in a big old way, just at sixes at sevens the poor guy, pacing and sweating and yelling and half-formed sentences and the whole nine. I mean, legitimately that is tough. He doesn't even know they trashed his boat! So he goes into hostage freakout mode for a while, and then suddenly -- and *totes* correctly -- realizes that Norman is to blame for every single part of what has gone wrong tonight, so he shoves the gun in his face, which I did *not* care for one bit, and Dylan and Norma distract him, and he wheels around on Norma and that's when Norman starts getting a little... Um, a little *redrum*, Mrs. Torrance. *Namron*. (Mother.)

But only when he hits her. She's swearing, absurdly, that nothing between them has to change, and no less absurdly is he swearing that he was not using his Asian sex-slave for Asian sex-slavery, and the punching starts, and then Norman flips the fuck out, barreling him into a tchotchke hutch and whatever, and while it would have been fun to see him go fully *Long Kiss Goodnight* ninja, like flip a knife in Shelby's eye or something, that is not the show we're watching, so: Brute strength, blunt objects. Just like with Dylan that first night, just like with Sam that first day.

Of course, having gone ham for the necessarily amount of time, Norman quickly blacks out, which means the firefight that immediately ensues between a bruised and bleeding Zach, and a swiftly shot-up Dylan, takes place alongside and around Norma's attempts to rouse Norman from his usual coma and then -- eventually -- dragging him to the front door in a visually relevant way, all the way out to the porch.

On the subject of Zach and Dylan's fight, which ranges all over the house and is nasty and scary and bad -- and most of all is bringing into heaven, into the only safe place left on earth, guns, and what they represent -- we will say little because a gunfight on paper is no gunfight at all.

But Norma calls 911 while she's waiting for Norman to wake up, and when he eventually comes around enough to limp down the hill with her, they make it to the car. She realizes she's forgotten her keys, and goes into meltdown about that -- without a functioning Norman to get her in line, it spirals quickly -- and then some fight-ending shots ring out. They sound different because they are different, so we'll know the fight is conclusively over, and the last thing we saw up the hill was Dylan fumbling for more bullets and bleeding out.

So that when the person comes down the hill, backlit by the blazing lights of their house, it could be one or the other. For the second time in seventeen years, Norma finds herself hoping that shadowy figure stalking toward them down the steps, slowly, will be Dylan and not his double. Bad news: It is Shelby. Good news: He drops dead on his face right before taking her out where she sits, behind the wheel. And then there's Dylan. She's never been so happy to see his face.

She throws herself on him, like she just learned this new thing called "hugs" from Emma Dekody, and he is for a moment more her son than ever before: You can see him wanting to relax into it, just like this morning, and not knowing how. But we know their bodies, we know how they cry out for this and how much they can't stand to be apart and can't stand to be together, and so we feel their relief and repulsion right alongside them, and it is excellent.

And when Dylan tells her "We're safe," all she can do is cry. The "we" sounds right, this time.

6+ MOS AGO

Dylan jokes around to calm her down, and she notices her son is bleeding, and remembers she called the cops. Without a Norman handy, she immediately goes into hand-wringing about "what are we gonna do," but he quickly reminds her who she's dealing with. It's like a slap to the face.

Dylan: "We? We are going to tell the entire truth. Your world is lies right now and it's making Norman crazy, and between you and me I kind of care what happens to you, and that means it's making us both crazy too. And half the time you're just spinning stories and you don't even know what's going on. So I'm going to tell what I know."

Norma: "Like you know anything. You know what? You wanna help steer this shit? Because you are not prepared for the facts. You think you're in charge of the story now, you're going to protect and you're going to invade? Then by God, here's the whole story. It's going to set you on *fire*."

And it does. It's nothing we don't know, but it's 60 percent of the first season to get there, so we run through **the pilot's opening few minutes** again, explaining how Sam was a little bit angry one day six months or so ago. Feeling man pains about how they didn't have any money, and what money they did have she was spending, and what she was spending it on made him feel like crap too, things like curtains for their deteriorating house, and everything was going -- I'd imagine -- pretty close to the way it usually went, so Norman turned on the blender and tried to wait it out, but the slapping became punching and hair-pulling and bending her over, bending her in half, so he went redrum and dumped out his smoothie and clubbed Sam with it, and the blood was going everywhere, and Norma mourned her dead husband before noticing that Norman was gone, to a place he might not come back

from, so she put him in bed and moved the body to the garage in a visually important way and pulled a shelf down on top of her dead husband, awkwardly, and got in the shower.

And when Norman woke up, he found his father, dead of an accident, and at first she couldn't understand why he was so upset -- perhaps, as he bashed on the door, she thought she'd be next, and she wouldn't have been wrong -- and then when she saw him, this beautiful sweet boy, terrified and mourning for his bloody father, she realized just how much she'd be carrying, from now on. And so she has. And any pain for Sam went away, and was replaced with sadness for her son, who was never going to be okay.

Dylan: "So like, what is wrong with him?"

What's wrong with him is right there, down the hill, smiling blankly and wondering what all the commotion is about, still not quite with us, as Norma and Dylan sit on the steps like old friends, as the sirens come closer and closer, talking only of him: This boy, the sweetest boy in the world. This beautiful lake in a world of concrete.

Norma: "Could be an isolated incident, who knows. But he's innocent of it. Not in theory, but in practice. It wasn't his fault, in any way. He didn't know what he was doing, and he doesn't know it now. And he must be protected. And that's all you want too."

"So you can either get out of my way, or you can help me."

NEXT WEEK

Whole new show, I guess. I'm guessin' Dylan does a little of both. First motel guest, lingering question marks with the cops -- who probably have noticed a pattern, at this point, here at the Bates Motel -- and fallout from the relationships that have come to define the show. Four episodes left, full of Remo and Romero and what happens when things fall apart and come back together. I guess it's possible that Jiao is out there somewhere in the Vancouver wilderness, living off berries and slowly coming off heroin, but I don't know that that's the better option. See you then.

The Man in Number 9, 107

"More Sweet To Me Than Sunlight"

PREVIOUSLY

Norman produced for his mother the very same Asian sex slave he'd been convinced her boyfriend was keeping in the basement, and then -- long story short -- her boyfriend died.

MOMENTS LATER

Dylan hands his gun over easily to Romero when he arrives and the Sheriff confirms his Deputy is dead, and then just when they're all screwing their eyes shut tight waiting for the thunder to come -- except for Norman, who is still basically out of it -- he tells them all to head up to the house.

MOMENTS LATERER

Norma wraps up telling Romero the entire first six episodes, except for the part where Norman killed her husband to begin with, but including the entire sordid awful story with Summers and the belt and the carpet and the girl. It was deliciously excruciating to live through at the time, but on reflection I guess you can see how quickly you could tell it.

Norma goes a little haywire -- "So that's the whole story, so you know everything now, I have nothing more to tell you, that's the entire truth, you know it all" -- and Romero waits for her to eventually wind down. Good luck with *that*, mister.

Romero: "Here's the story. I've been suspicious of Shelby for a while, and kind of thought he might have killed Keith and thrown him in the bay, and he was hiding one of these girls on Keith's boat and I was getting closer and closer -- a hero, a hunter, an uncoverer of life's darker mysteries..."

Dylan: "Ugh, for real? Men really *are* the worst, Norma."

Norma/n: "Shh! Dylan, this is scintillating. A fascinating tale of derring-do. That saves our asses."

Romero: "...Just then! Knowing Romero was on the case, Shelby tried to move the girl and after a manhunt in which I did not call backup, because I do not need backup, we had ourselves a showdown. I killed Zach Shelby with this gun right here..."

Dylan: "Fucking A. That is my gun. I did all of this you're talking about. Also, why did I get shot in the arm in this story?"

Romero: "Meh. You got in the way..."

Norma/n: "You do tend to do that."

Romero: "...In the way of my *justice*."

Norman: "What about Jiao? Isn't she off dead in the woods somewhere?"

Romero: "I guess. That happened before I got here. And killed Zach Shelby. With my enormous penis."

Norma/n: "This is the best story we have ever heard."

Romero: "So we're all clear? That's it?"

Norma/n: "That! Is! It!"

Dylan: "I seriously was like the most unbelievably rad person and you guys are just... I mean, that's it?"

Norma/n: "That! Is! It!"

Dylan: "I got shot in the arm for you assholes."

Norma/n: "That! Is! It!"

They rattle around on the couch like a couple of puppies at a puppy-party and it gets a little too skeezy for old Dylan, so he and his broken arm take off. They're still giggling and rolling around when he splits, and it's so uncomfortable. But also: That's it. I mean, every second since they got here has been *misery*, even the nice parts always with a black cloud of awful over them, so you can see why he's not really a

part of the story -- he was a part of the awfulness until about ten minutes ago -- but still. Show some class.

NEXT AM

Norman and Bradley make love under the sheets again, but this time in daylight. You know this is a masturbatory fantasy the second it starts, because Bradley was like *explicit* that they were not together or even ever hooking up again, but also because of this:

Bradley: "What if your mom hears us downstairs?"

Norman: "She's never gonna hear us. Trust me."

I don't buy it. He would maybe hook up down in the motel if the stars aligned just right, but no way would he do it in the same house as Norma. Which leads me to believe this is part of the thrill here, like, as long as you're boning Bradley you might as well throw some Roman Centurions or a Pegasus in, just for flavor.

Things are just getting good when ol' Norma just sweeps right in, talking *absolute nonsense* about the birds and how the motel is opening next week and eventually just trilling actual birdsong, is how crazy and the whole time he's dying on the inside, carefully stowing his dick and then willing things to stop, horribly and so cutely. It's adorable, the whole thing is so sweet.

Norman: "You're pretty manic today, huh?"

Norma: "I prefer to think of it as *filled with purpose*."

She sits down incredibly close to his boner and takes his hand so she can keep hollering about life and possibility and birds and whatever, and how Sheriff Romero seems like a good enough guy after all, and everything is over, and it's going to be wonderful and the whole time he's like, *She can tell*. And as she's leaving, she shoots the bunched-up covers over his adorable self a very odd look, like she's angry at it.

UNDER THE HOUSE

Before school, Norman has been tasked with fixing the lattice under the porch. Under there he finds a terrifying, very strange and dirty little doggie, and because he is Norman, he tries very hard to make friends with the doggie. The dog is not so sure about Norman, because she is a wild stray, but also because he is weird as hell.

BREAKFAST

When Dylan comes in -- jacket over his shoulders due to the broken arm, which makes him look like he's about to start his first day at the Hogwarts School Of Witchcraft & Wizardry -- Norma is cooking and has graciously plated him a delicious square meal, which she offers with a smile. Having never seen her smile at him before, Dylan is instantly alert to danger.

Dylan: "What is this. What kind of a trick is this."

Norma: "It's not a trick, silly! It's the most important meal of the day!"

Dylan: "Why did you do this. I am nervous about everything going on."

Norma: "Can't a mother make her ssssss... her child breakfast?"

Dylan: "Some mothers, but not you. Listen, you know I'm still moving out, right? Just because I protected you that one time and you gave me the first hug I have ever received in my life doesn't make you less crazy in the days to come."

Her affect, of course, changes instantly. The smile slides off her face like a sunny-side-up egg. I thought for a second she was going to do something to his breakfast, like send it flying at his head. So, I think, do they both.

Norma: "*What?* Did you not hear me say that Norman is the crazy one and that we need to always watch out for him in case he goes crazy again? Surely you can see why I would need help. He's such a handful, that Norman."

Dylan: "Yeah, nevertheless. I mean, I'm not leaving town. I can still help you. I just can't be in the actual plague miasma of your trainwreck life. I need to be apart."

Norma: "What did you get shot for, if not so I could swallow you whole?"

Dylan: "That was just me being awesome, which is the opposite of what I will be, if I continue to hang around here."

They get into a dreadfully awkward fight over the garbage can, and eventually he wrests the bag away from her.

Norma: "Fine! Take out my garbage! Great! What a good kid! *Thanks!*"

OUT BACK

Still wizarding around in his jacket, poor old Dylan mumbles dejectedly as he trashes the trash and then notices a *super fucking creepster* idling in the parking lot with sunglasses and a staring problem. Dylan, because he was raised by wolves, knows a monster when he sees one, so he steps up and wizards over into the dude's face.

Creep: "Can you tell me what happened to the Seafairer [sic] Motel?"

Dylan: "It is the Bates Motel now. New owners. Still crazy as shit, though."

Creep: "Perhaps I will take a room. Do you have any creepy rape suites available?"

Dylan: "We're not opening for another week, sorry."

Creep: "This is B.S. Where is Keith Summers? We're old monster business partners in the flesh trade together, obviously."

Dylan: "Dead as hell, my friend. Appendages chewed off by fish, is how dead."

Dude just rolls the window up on him, puts those devil sunglasses back on his menacing face and purrs on out of there. It is terrifying. Everybody in my house was like, "Norma, your new boyfriend has arrived."

SCHOOL

Norman's just normaning his way down the hall, hoping and hoping, when he finally spots her: Bradley, with all her satellite Bradleys hugging her and offering their condolences about her dead burned up father.

Norman: "BRADLEY! Bradley Bradley Bradley Bradley you're back!"

Bradley: "Hmm. Yes, hi. Can't hide behind death forever."

Bradleys: "That was so deep. Oh my God, death has made you so deep. Bradley, we wrote your book report for you. It is on *The Odyssey*, which is about a father who would do anything and risk any punishment to return to his family. Eventually, unlike your dad, he makes it home."

Norman: "Anyway. So will I see you later? And we can start planning our wedding?"

I've thought this actress was a good choice, but something about the eloquently awkward and noncommittal and brutally realistic shrug she gives him as she's walking, backwards, away from him, is just perfect: She's just bein' Bradley, man. Don't cage her up -- she's barely there to begin with.

Did you know the Nice Guy thing is an actual stage of human male development? Oh, it's some sick shit. Basically Jung has it set up, you know, with the anima inside the man (look out, Norman!) and the animus inside the woman, and so -- as a natural consequence of the male privilege that has defined us as long as there have been people -- men go through a thing throughout their lives where they look at women as defined through this personal, internal female self.

And the other major contrasexual archetypes are already filling up with experiences and numinosity -- the Goddess, the Mommy -- and informing it (watch out, Norman!), so a lot of male development actually is about navigating these waters consciously, about seeing the ways that other people don't and do line up with your experiences, with those changing and developing personal archetypes and continually refining them all, down there in the lake under the concrete. (This is also what *The Odyssey* is about, which is why so many of those run-ins are with goddesses and demigoddesses: why Penelope has to do everything she can to keep the men off her back while she waits for her husband; why Telemachus must plunge himself into the world of men without a guide, because he's fatherless; why Calypso eventually has to let Ulysses go.)

And then there's the Dream Girl problem, which is that the more vague you come off -- Jung's word was "elfin" -- the more they can project their shit on you, because you just absorb it, because you have no conflicting qualities that would contradict the projection and force them to think about their insides versus your outsides and how they are actually two completely different universes. Bradley is a prime example -- **Serena van der Woodsen**, anybody named Daisy in any story, *The Virgin Suicides* -- because she knows better than to say or do anything that's gonna bite her in the ass later. But that bites her in the ass, because you're more than just a receptacle for other people's desire, and hopefully you can convince some people of that before you get your heart broken.

But just like lots of people don't ever get around to understanding that other people are *people* -- that they're just as real as you -- lots of men aren't ever called on to think about women that way. Like, for example, one of the steps in anima development is figuring out that women are *capable of telling right from wrong*. Which sounds like some sick shit, but not when you think about how most male judgments of women have to do with them being "irrational" or "a little bit stupid" or whatever it is. I mean, it's sick shit either way, but if you think about it developmentally, it's no sicker than figuring out that pets can feel pain or your parents don't go away when you close your eyes or whatever thing you need to learn. And usually the world forces you to learn these things.

But the world is tilted a certain way where it's not necessarily going to force you to figure these things out about women -- and that, in fact, this is so pervasive that women also have to figure this stuff out. Like White Pine Bay, the world is -- until very recently and for the most part still -- a story told exclusively through male eyes. Devouring ones. And so when you hit Nice Guy level, what you're really talking about is a Thing you don't understand, but has something you want and you've received just enough information to form a very, *very* blurry hypothesis about how to get it.

And then every time you try one of these magic tricks -- "showing emotion" or "being nice" or "acting like women are people" -- and it doesn't work, well, that's going to piss you off. Especially if the world is already tilted so you mostly get what you want without even having to ask. I am always glad I am not a woman, because this world would turn me into Norma Bates very quickly, no question; I am usually even more glad that I am not a straight man, because that is some embarrassing, sad, ultimately disappointing bullshit to come with -- and factory-standard, at that.

And *Norma Bates's son*? The second self of a narcissist and therefore the center of the universe by virtue of being an extension of the actual center of the universe? His world's gonna be tilted, um, more than most. He knows women are people -- they are, in fact, his entire world -- but that doesn't mean he's ever gonna get used to seeing things that aren't there.

He's brilliant, sensitive, tender and sweet, and those are all qualities that confer some pretty clear vision on you. But ask any smartest guy in any room what the hardest thing is and it's going to be that when you're right about 99% of everything, that 1% is the killer thing: Because you're never going to figure out that you're wrong about it, because you're basically never wrong. And when that happens, you can either go crazy or just proceed with the idea that it's the *world* that's wrong.

You and I know -- because we are not teenage boys -- that Bradley has been upfront with him since they met, and there is actually no confusion to be had here. And Bradley knows that he was an easy mark and probably in retrospect won't be figuring it out in time to save himself. But Norman? Norman's not like us, he's not like anybody: He knows the world is wrong on this one and anything Bradley says or does (or doesn't say, or doesn't do) is just going to get recapitulated into the confabulation. The difference between a Nice Guy, a Stalker and a regular person is simply a matter of degree.

But in the meantime, you're just Penelope: You have shit to do, regardless of whatever feelings they're feeling.

A LOVELY RESTAURANT

Norma: "Hi! I'm Norma Bates! You're the manager at this lovely restaurant?"

Liz Morgan: "I am Liz Morgan. Check out my beautiful face, which is not happy to see you."

Norma: "Well! I am the proud owner of a new motel in town and I wanted to do some networking... I could advertise your restaurant to my out-of-towners and you could..."

Liz: "I'm gonna stop you right there. I'm guessing I'm the first person you came to, just by happenstance, which is lucky because I'm actually going to be compassionate and explain the situation in detail. I am not comfortable being in a handshake agreement with you, and nobody is going to be and you are

screwed. See, this is the WPB and that self-serving Sheriff story currently circulating does not do you any favors."

Norma: "Why *whatever do you mean.*"

Liz: "I mean like you dated a sex maniac? Who died at your house? Which was owned by another sex maniac? Who died?"

Norma: "Yes, but the only way that would be embarrassing is if I got raped at some point, which I officially did not."

Liz: "No, I'm afraid it's embarrassing either way. Sorry."

Norma shows off several of her best faces, the sad demented ones like some lady on the bus being the most heartwrenching, and -- she's her son's mother -- even stands there for a while waiting on the world to nudge itself back into being a kind, just and most importantly Norma-serving place, but it just never does so she takes her shame and her box of brochures back out to the car.

BACK AT THE OFFICE

Norma, weirdly, checks the schedule as if to make sure she hasn't accidentally made any reservations without her own knowledge, but it's still empty. Outside, the creeping creeper Jake Abernathy creeps.

Norma: "Hey, guy jostling the doors of my closed motel in the dead of a rainy night!"

Jake: "I'm Jake Abernathy. I think I left some of my shit here. Have you seen any comic books around? Or maybe some sex slaves?"

Norma: "Nope, nothing like that. Listen, how can I serve you?"

Jake: "I want to stay in room number nine. Only room number nine. I have money."

Norma: "Let me just get you a key, then."

She nervously dicks around for a second -- is that a 6 or a 9? -- and then brings it out to him.

Norma: "There's towels and whatever and I just am very happy that my dream is coming true and we have guests staying here finally and the amount of red-flags going off right now cannot possibly break my spirit and so if you need anyth..."

(Slam!)

Norma: "Mmkay. Welcome to the Bates Motel! Please don't get blood on the carpet, we just had a... oh, never mind. Momma's tired."

LATER

Dylan parks down the hill, notices the car and lights and Satanic sex rituals being performed, and wonders what on earth is going on. For the record, he has replaced the blown-up truck of Weeping Dead Ethan with a larger, even more extended-cab black truck.

Dylan: "So somebody's staying in the motel?"

Norma: "I guess it's a soft opening? He said he had a standing reservation at the Seafairer, [sic], every two months for a week. I was like, *Be our guest!* Check me out, a small business owner."

Dylan: "Check me out, cockblocking you like usual. That dude is creepy times a million, Norma. This is no way for a dream to come true."

Norma: "I don't think he was weird! He was perfectly normal!"

Dylan: "He sat in the driveway for like ever, watching me toss the garbage. He namedropped Keith Summers, for God's sake."

Norma: "Those are perfectly normal behaviors!"

Long-suffering, good old Dylan heads over to Room #9 to at least do the bare minimum of due diligence.

Dylan: "Hey, sorry to interrupt your sex murder or whatever, but could I get at the very least a driver's license and a credit card? Because this is a business?"

Jake: "Ugh, so plebian. Here's my license for five blurred seconds, and several hundred-dollar bills for you to suck on."

Dylan: "Then I guess I will."

Dylan: "Put this on your Toldya So Bingo board -- he paid in cash and... What are you doing now?"

Norma: "Scrubbing the blood off my home's front porch in the middle of the night, obviously. Like a maniac, because I am a maniac."

Dylan: "Stone is porous, you can't scrub blood out of it. If it were a truck we could blow it up, but since it's your house..."

Norma: "I'm gonna keep scrubbing. You know that about me. And also, what, I'm just gonna wait? *Another beautiful morning in White Pine Bay! Listen to those birds! Oh, and check out that location where my boyfriend bled out after accidentally raping me and nearly killing everybody.* Does that sound like something I would stand for?"

Dylan: "No, but that's not the point. The point is that what you are doing is meaningless."

Norma: "You talk a good game about moving on, but listen. Those bitches in town wouldn't take my brochures. It was like that part in *Pretty Woman*, only I never got to go shopping. Awful."

Dylan: "The WPB is a town without pity, it's true. But it'll blow over. At this rate, somebody is going to be lit on fire or turn up in the harbor by tomorrow."

Norma: "If we don't do a bang-up business, we'll be marked as failures! I will be the laughingstock of White Pine! They will win. And I will be god damned, Dylan Texas, if I let that happen. Those fuckers are never going to get one over on old Norma Bates."

Dylan: "You're gonna wear yourself out eventually, I guess. Have at it. Oh, and here's the money your stupid ass forgot to ask for, 'small business owner.' You're welcome."

NEXT AM

Dylan: "You know how I'm moving out as quickly as possible? Because check out your mother scrubbing her knuckles raw outside in the middle of the night, if you please."

Norman: "I can't go with you. You know that."

Dylan: "No, I get it. I'm not even gonna... whoa, where did you just go?"

Bradley is stepping out of a car and Norman is rapt with attention. Dylan follows the magnetic ley lines of his intense stare, takes the girl in, takes Norman in and tries to connect the dots. But he can't, because Bradley is beautiful -- perfect, for our purposes -- and Norman is just Norman. He's still staring when Bradley comes near, forced to say hello. She can't take her eyes off him either. Norman tries not to notice.

Bradley: "You work for Gil, right? My dad used to work with him. Jerry Martin?"

Dylan: "Oh, shit. That's... I'm really sorry."

Bradley: "Thanks, that's really sexy of you to say."

Norman: "You better get that food home! Before it gets cold!"

Dylan: "Wait, for real that is the booty call girl?"

Norman: "Yep. And we are very much in love."

Dylan: "As I was instrumental in making this happen, I'm doubly sorry for what's clearly about to happen next."

THAT NIGHT

Checking on Norman -- as we know now she must do a lot more of than we could have surmised -- Norma hears a banging sound downstairs. An invader. And since everything is safe now, she wonders if it's Dylan. It is not. It's just a screen door, bashing in a sudden wind. And all that safety Dylan brought into the house just leaks right out again.

SUNDAY AM

Emma: "Just me, feeling very freaked out because I managed to get the one sex slave I was trying to save murdered, and you guys totally left me hanging and Norman is kind of the worst boyfriend ever. And also, did you get a dog?"

Norma: "Why is there a bowl of fucking dog food on the porch? Oh, hey. I just realized you were talking. Let me go get Norman with my sugary-sweetest voice so you think I adore you."

Norman: "Tell her to leave. I can't handle it. I hate it when people project their romantic obsessions on you without your consent; it makes you feel like an object. Like, how is this my problem that you're all in love with me and shit?"

Norma: "Uh, she's totally sweet and very much into you. And will die soon."

Norman: "Maybe sometimes you don't lead people on, Penelope? Sometimes that works out better. Think about that wisdom. Now excuse me, I have to write Mrs. Bradley Bates on my notebook eleven thousand more times and then she will love me."

Norma: "In closing, I would just like to get very volatile for a second about how you are attracting strays to the house. *Straybitches*. And then I have to deal with them."

Norma: "Emma, that boy can be a real piece. Sorry he's dogging you like this. Also, not at all sorry, because you stole his virtue and sullied him forever."

Emma: "Okay. Can I still stare at you like a startled ghost for about ten minutes? I kind of wish I had a mom and you're kind of the most awesomely insane person I ever met."

Norma: "...You know what, why don't you come with me into town. I need to pick up some window sheers and it's time for my semi-annual display of concern for another living being."

Emma: "That sounds pretty rad. Can we do donuts in the parking lot while you scream your face off?"

Norma: "More than likely, my dear."

ON THE ROAD

Norma: "How do people talk, how to do human talking... yes. Emma, Norman has been distracted lately, so I wouldn't take it personally. You know, between the rapes and murders and sex slaves and arrests and whatnot. Dylan fuckin' everything up all the time."

Emma: "He does seem to be pretty distant. Pretty distracted."

Norma: "Any thoughts on that?"

Emma: "I go to school with her, obviously."

Norma: "Hold up, you're not sleeping with him? What the hell, there's another girl?"

Emma: "Yeah, her name is Bradley and she is perfect. Gorgeous and popular. And super kind, so you can't even hate her. It's the worst."

Norma: "That *is* the worst!"

Emma, characteristically: "She is like *a locomotive of sexual energy*."

The crazy light goes off over Norma's head in a *big* way, almost like Emma planned it rather than just talking in her usual hilarious Emma way.

Norma: "I'm so sure some high school cheerleader is all that big a deal."

Emma: "Don't be a hater, Mrs. Bates. We can go spy on her in her yoga class if you want, after we pick up the window sheers..."

Norma: "You are in it to win it, little girl."

Emma: "But I mean, that would be crazy. Right?"

YOGA STUDIO, IMMEDIATELY

Norma: "Listen, and I'm saying this as much to myself as you, high school boys are ephemeral* in a lot of ways. He might be into her this week, but it doesn't mean anything. You hear me, Emma? IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING. SHE'S NOT ALL THAT."

Emma: "You be the judge."

*(What she actually says is "high school boys are not deep," which my brain heard several rewinds in a row as "high school boys are not people," which frankly. Either way she means, Penelope's got shit to do, whatever feelings they're feeling.)

They peeeeeeeek around the corner, into the studio and watch Bradley do a bunch of sensual yoga, and eventually Norma kind of fugues out and can't stop imagining like every possible sexual act. It's disturbing and graphic and still just adorable, even the blowjob part that kind of gave me nightmares.

Emma: "We gotta get some food in you, Mrs. Bates."

Norma: "Yeah, I'm losing the plot. You know what, though? I know that girl. She showed up at my door the first day we lived here! Sniffing around like that, just imagine."

Emma: "No problem."

MEANWHILE

Norman is coaxing the dog, which he has named Juno -- another name for Hera, which is another name for Norma Bates -- onto the porch. It's the whole *Petit Prince* thing, that taming thing, that "I will be so quiet and still and you won't even know how close you're getting" thing, that I do think is pretty accurate about love, but only if you don't know you're doing it.

HOWEVER

Norma has motherfucking had it with this kid and this dog and the whole mess.

Norma: "You don't know *anything* about that dog. She could have another owner who misses her and is taking her to Prom. More than likely she has had her *share* of owners. You think you're special? You think you're her first? Look at that creature."

Norman: "Mother, she's totally safe. Just scared. Obviously lost. She has no home. She's lonely. Normal is *having* a dog."

Norma: "Well, you got me with that last one. Fine. But I'm not taking care of her."

Norma: "Norman, come sit down for the weirdest thing that has ever happened."

Norman: "Sure, I don't see anything ominous about that at all."

Norma: "Sex is a serious thing, Norman."

Norman: "I could have sworn we were talking about a dog."

Norma: "There is nothing funny about this conversation I have now surprised you with. You have to be CAREFUL."

Norman: "I know about all that."

Norma: "I don't mean protection, I mean you have to be CAREFUL."

Norman: "Say it in more florid, awful detail."

Norma: "You don't know that girl well enough to be screwing her."

Norman: "First of all, yikes. And second of all, she's totally nice."

Norma: "That remains to be seen. Personally, I don't think *nice* girls come to your doorstep looking for a guy one day after he moves in. Or sleep with someone they barely know. At the age of 17, no less..."

Norman: "Hold up, you have a dossier on this person?"

Norma: "Bradley Martin. I know everything, Norman. Everything all of the time."

Norma's always-flawless body language launches into overdrive now, as she points and touches various spots all over her body in a totally freaky way -- half-clinical half-careless -- as she's talking. And oh, what is she *saying*?

"Norman, did you know that having sex with a woman literally affects her physical being? There are chemicals that are released in a woman's body during and after sex that actually alter her. It's like *ascience experiment*. It affects her *mind*, okay? That's dangerous stuff. That's not something you want to be dabbling around in for fun."

He pulls her back, simply by declaring in his guileless forceful way that yes, I know what you're talking about -- in the most insane way possible -- and yes, I am not a jerk that will just cause girls to go crazy in love with me, except they do and will and yes you are right that oxytocin is a thing and this is why chocolate is delicious, but listen the hell up: I like this girl. This one particular girl. Stop trying to figure out who is the bad guy, who is the *man*, in this situation: I am devoted to her and she to me. Whatever first sexual experience you were planning on me never happening, this was ideal. So quit.

Norma: "Okay, I buy it. But you know I'm not going down that easy. I have hired Emma to work at the motel several afternoons a week."

Norman: "Is that where you were all day? Hanging around with my spare girlfriend?"

Norma: "Yeah, and I gave her a job and I love her and you will marry her and then she will die and I won't ever have to worry about any of this ever again."

Norman: "What I'm hearing is that you think I can't handle Bradley, like she's too awesome for me, and therefore I should go with weird oxygen girl."

Norma: "Obviously, but I would never say that out loud."

Norman: "I am about to throw a total fit, lady."

Norma: "Come on, you're not actually dating Bradley. When was the last time you did anything, or got more than a few seconds of face time, or she answered a text, or..."

Between Dylan and Norma both trying to save him from the face-melting explosion of awfulness he's about to bring down on his own head, Norman has motherfucking had it. He stomps his wonderful self all around the place for a while and then heads out into White Pine Bay, to lock this shit down once and for all.

BRADLEY'S HOUSE

Bradley: "Oh, shit. Hey Norman. You know, growing up in a Bret Easton Ellis novel has made most of us here in town pretty jaded? So like, could you not just cross-apply our sexual neurasthenia into this equation and understand that we never, ever have to have this..."

Norman: "As I have made perfectly clear in my many, many voicemails, emails, anonymous letters, postcards and psychic messages that I know only you can hear, *we are in love*. Got it?"

Bradley: "I mean, but no we're not."

Norman: "We are in *love*. You are acting ridiculous! Stop being afraid, I'm here to save you and protect you forevermore. Do you need support while you break up with Richard Slymore? Do you need comfort while you navigate the choppy strange waters of our innate spiritual connection?"

Bradley: "No, I need you to take it down like a million notches."

Norman: "Just let me finish. There is no point hiding from it anymore. I know how we feel about each other, I know we're both just scared and confused. I know we have a connection. Every time I see you, it's there. Making love to you was a peak experience. For both of us."

Bradley: "This is some ugly shit, Norman. I am real sorry about this."

Norman: "Sorry about what? It'll be a June wedding, we can both still go to college. My mommy can make us breakfast every day."

Bradley: "Norman, I want you to listen to me very carefully for one second, okay? Not to what you think I'm saying, or the tonal gradations in my voice that you can later decide were significant. The actual

words. You feel me?"

Norman: "Inside every part of myself, all the time. Beating out a sweet tattoo. It's the cord of communion, Bradley."

Bradley: "Actual words, okay? *I do not like you in that way*. We had sex but that's what it was. It was great, you're great, but I am not Truman and this is not your Show."

What Bradley Says: "I shouldn't have done it with someone like you."

What Bradley Means: "I never should have pulled this shit on somebody as special as you, that actually cares for me and would actually take things this far."

What Norman Hears: "Like you're good enough for me."

Eyes suddenly black as coal he tears off into the night, flapping his arms like he does, and she follows, shouting for him to stop, turn back, let her talk him down. Make it right. He can't hear Bradley, though, because somebody else is speaking. Her words, coming out of his mouth.

Mother: "Personally, I don't think *nice* girls come to your doorstep looking for a guy one day after he moves in. Or sleep with someone they barely know. At the age of 17, no less. I mean really, what kind of girl does that? Invites you over to have sex with them after their dad dies?"

Mother's ramping up for some serious damage, some violent scary shit, when Bradley finally catches up to them. He whirls on her, it's scary and sad and -- given the way this show operates -- not entirely out of the question that he is about to bash her head in.

Norman: "*I don't think you're a nice girl*."

He starts to fugue out, you can actually see the thing moving in, taking the wheel and then -- because she's Bradley, because she's amazing -- Bradley pushes past the dark clouds gathering, throws her arms around him, drives the demon out. Just instinctively she does this -- embrace-as-exorcism -- and Mother falls to her. For now.

Norman comes back to himself, almost gratefully, and they cry there together in the road. Just a boy and a girl who want more than anything to be happy. No demons, no Mother. Just a mistake everybody saw him about to make, and the heartbreak to follow: "I'm really sorry," she says. "I wish it was different."

It's not a lot, but it's enough. Just barely enough.

MOTEL OFC

Jake: "Hey, sorry to startle you. I just wanted to say how nice it is here. Better than when Summers ran the place, for the most part."

Norma: "I hope the amenities are on a commensurate level with what you were..."

Jake: "How are the reservations going?"

Norma: "Zilch."

Jake: "Well, word of mouth is everything. I know the women of WPB aren't helping you out, but I'm a

man from an even wider world than that. Let's set up an arrangement like I had with Summers, and I'll do what I can to get the word out."

Norma: "Sure! Awesome. Room nine every eighth week? I'll just type that into the..."

Jake: "The whole motel, actually. First week of every other month."

Norma: "Blackout dates are... Well, I guess I'll be getting paid either way, so you're on."

Norma: "So this is what, like for the other people you work with?"

Jake: "Kind of!"

Norma: "What kind of business are you in, again?"

Jake: "Sales."

Norma: "Sales. And you always pay in cash..."

Jake: "And no room service. Nobody fucking around. We like privacy."

Norma: "And there's that... Listen, this sounds pretty much like the most illegal thing in the entire world, actually."

Jake: "Don't be silly!"

Norma: "Okay I won't!"

OUTSIDE

On his way home, feeling whatever is opposite of his last triumphant return from Bradley's but at least not permanently relinquishing his mind to anybody, Norman spots Juno on the road, and she's happy to see him, and then you know what happens next and it's just too awful. He's crying with his most cryface-face ever, carrying this limp dead dog, the guy who ran over her feels bad, but not *that* bad, Norma comes running out with her Spidey-Sense all activated by Norman's feelings, and Norman's just screaming his head off, walking like a zombie.

Norma: "Norman, get out of the street, what are you doing?"

Norman: "I killed my dog! I'm taking her to Emma's dad. *He can fix dead things.*"

I don't know why -- I mean, I totally know why, but you know what I mean -- that sent a shiver down the spine, just that particular wording. It's creepy in a way that's specific to the overall legend and franchise, but also... oh, honey. No he can't. That's an angle I hadn't thought of: We use taxidermy to hold onto things, after they're gone. To pretend we never lost them. Because we lose so much anyway. He can fix dead things.

Norma: "Well, this is crazy."

Norman: "IT IS NOT FUCKING CRAZY."

Norma: "Whoa, the black eyes. Okay, I'll get the car. Jesus."

Terrified for him, she runs for the car, and he stands there with her in his arms: His first victim. The first one he killed out of love, instead of anger. The first one that counts.

Norman, weeping: "I was wrong, Mother. About *everything*."

Norma: "Oh. I'm so sorry, honey."

Norman: "Now go get the car."

NEXT WEEK

Professor Quirrell does stuff to Juno; Jake Abernathy is shocked that Norma is shocked by his obvious sex-murdering predilections; Miss Watson's existence messes with Norman's tenuous grip; other amazing, shocking things occur. This really is just the best show.

A Boy & His Dog, 108

"A Most Stormy Life"

PREVIOUSLY

Norman had a dog named Juno for a hot minute, and then she died just from knowing him. A total creepster showed up at the motel, tripping all of Dylan's red flags and zero of Norma's, even after he all but specifically told her he was a sex murderer and would be using the motel for a week of sex murders every other month. Norman creaped out Bradley by Nice Guying her almost to death, even after she all but specifically told her their sex was going to be meaningless. It was one of Norman's worst days!

DEKODY

Will Dekody: "Little boy, this is how you taxidermy a dog."

Norman: "I don't know what normal is!"

Will, verbatim: "The art of it is to recreate the beauty of motion in something still. To create life if you will. Here is where we'll make incisions... Then you have to take everything out."

Norman: "That's fine. I figured. Viscera, et cetera."

Will: "I'm sorry your dog died, on the one hand, but on the other hand isn't this so fun?"

Norman: "I thought it would be dishonorable to just bury her in the ground. She gets so lonely."

Will: "It's okay to project your feelings onto an animal, especially a dead one. Especially if you're not even talking about the dog, but your future taxidermied mom."

Norman: "I must say, I'm very impressed by your aplomb."

Will: "Would you like a job here? Your sociopathic lack of affect right now and your adorably affable nature in general make you well-suited to the morbid professions."

Norman: "If there is any way to make you my dad without having to marry your daughter, count me in!"

LADIES

Emma's having a private CF meltdown in the bathroom when Bradley's interchangeable bitches show up and immediately start fawning over how great Bradley is, just like you assume they would; particularly today they are amazed by how gracefully she condescends to Norman Bates.

Girl: "I feel so bad for him!"

Girl: "I know! Because he's so pathetic."

Girl: "We're not sympathetic so much as monsters."

Girl: "I think Norman Bates might have actual mental issues."

Girl: "I know! It's funny. But also sad. But mostly funny. Teenagers are the devil."

Girl: "It's because we're not finished growing up yet!"

Girl: "Like how Norman thinks he's gonna tap that. Not even Bradley is dead enough on the inside to swipe that hot mess's v-card."

Girl: "Give her a few years! I'm one blunt away from doing it myself."

Emma: "Greetings, bitches. By the way, Norman already fucked her. It made me cry one lonely Indian Chief tear."

Girl: "I don't think you understood the conversation you were eavesdropping on, tbh."

Emma: "Or maybe *you* don't know what the fuck *you're* talking about."

Girl: "Or maybe we will gang up on you and stab you in the ill-working lung."

Emma: "Or maybe I'mma drop the mic and walk out of here like a boss."

It's pretty great. I mean, don't *ever* tell people things, but Emma's one constant virtue (among*many*) is disclosure, and this opens up a pretty rich vein throughout the whole episode where she just keeps saying true stuff and then getting out of it by saying more true stuff until you're like, This chick's honesty is the ultimate armor. Too bad the princess she keeps saving has been raised to lie about everything, at all times.

...Which is what makes me worry, actually. This town is Norma's oyster, in that everything she does is irritating: We always talk about it like the immune system of White Pine Bay, just erupting with horrors at the mere mention of her name. But Emma's lacking Norma's selfishness -- her errant warped sense of self-preservation -- and so all that comes through is this single-minded pursuit of the truth. They're both marked for death, but Emma's drives cut even closer to the bone if you think about it. She doesn't give a shit about what happens to her because she already knows what happens to her, so all that's left is the truth: The one thing the WPB hates more than a woman with property.

BATES MOTEL

Staring holes in the internet is not causing that highway project to be canceled, and lighting black candles while chanting the names of the planning committee can only get you so far, so Norma decides to just double-down and fuck things up for herself as efficiently as possible.

Lady: "Distractingly beautiful admin lady at the WPBPD, what is your emergency?"

Norma: "My emergency is, I need to talk to my best friend Sheriff Romero!"

Lady: "He is not taking this call. Ever. Can you spell your name for me?"

Norma: "Uh, it's BATES. B as in *bitch*..."

Who's that down in the parking lot? Why, it's No. 9, creeping around in an all-black outfit in the middle of the day like some kind of angel of death. Does that worry her? No way, that's just what creeps do.

Man, Dylan could not have been wrong about this guy. Maybe he can help with this civil engineering conundrum, Norma! Or tie you up and murder you! One or the other.

POT FIELDS

Dylan gets a call from Gil: The Red Creek field has been reaped and needs trimming, and they need to drive down to Fortuna CA and pick up some low-life trimmers.

Dylan: "What exactly are trimmers?"

Gil: "Whatever, just ask Remo. Anything you are wondering about, ask Remo. That is what he is there for. To seethe and to answer questions. And be hot."

Remo: "Or I just won't tell you what trimmers are. Pack a bag, we're going on an overnight vacation together. It is going to get weird."

Dylan: "But what exactly are trimmers, though?"

Remo: "The only thing I've got over you right now is knowing what that word means. I am not giving that up for shit. Get your panties and let's go."

SCHOOL

Bradley: "What in the actual fuck were you thinking?"

Norman: "Back up and restart, okay?"

Bradley: "You told Tank Girl we fucked and she told the entire bathroom. Good thing it was only my minions, but you've seriously damaged my stranglehold on teen politics. Not to mention pissing off the clearly abusive Richard Slymore, when he gets wind of this."

Norman: "This is the first I'm hearing of it. But wait, aren't we dating?"

Bradley: "We already weren't dating when you got possessed outside my house, and now we are super not dating. Just forget it ever happened."

Norman: "But I cannot."

OUTSIDE

Miss Watson: "Norman, where are you going? Please don't tie me up and torture me to death for asking, but what is up? It's the middle of the day."

Norman: "I am having PROBLEMS!"

Miss Watson: "Of course you are, you're a trainwreck. But you still need a note."

Norman: (*Flails.*)

Miss Watson: "My boundaries!"

Norman: "I'm sorry I flailed. I am still not entirely in charge of my gangly body."

Miss Watson: "I worry that you will be suspended!"

Norman: "Not a priority. Blood's a rover. Good day, Miss Watson!"

He goes stomping off, arms and legs still not entirely under control, and as usual it's only minorly scary and mostly just adorable.

No. 9

Norma: "Housekeeping! And general checking up on your awful ass!"

Jake: "I was literally just sitting in a chair in the dark because I am terrifying. Please, go right ahead. I am a very dirty boy! Ooh, I can watch you clean and touch myself through my slacks, that'll be a riot."

Norma: "I can come back later! And in a less housemaid-y outfit!"

Jake: "*I insist.*"

Well, you know Norma and the amazing way her body does everything, so she cleans around his scary self, and is just generally both flippant and paranoid at the same time. At one point she absentmindedly *twangs* the fake-wood trim peeling off a bedside table and it is literally one of the funniest things you've ever seen. She makes everything so great.

Jake: "Hey, I heard about a death!"

Norma: "Yeah, my son's dog died just from knowing him. It was a real fucking hassle."

Jake: "No, I meant that cop guy that I used to have murder orgies with. Did you know him?"

Norma: "Who knows anybody, really?"

Jake: "But I mean, you knew him. Correct?"

Norma: "I knew parts of him. Some better than others. You might say we knew opposite versions of him. Then I met your Shelby and then he was dead."

He menaces enough that she knocks a lamp over and immediately heads for the door to replace the bulb slash get the fuck out of there.

Jake: "Keep cleaning! You must keep going! I am so dirty!"

Norma: "...My son Norman. He's my go-to excuse for getting the hell out of places."

Jake: "He's at school. Or wandering around setting shit on fire with his mind."

Norma: "I know! That's why I have to go!"

There is some very terrifying business with the cart, where he jerks her to a stop and then his creepy velvet hands retrieve some towels from the cart, and then she's out, and then -- I honestly don't know how she got it to do this, or how many takes it took -- she shoves the cart off down the corridor, and it swings wide like carts do, and it's so awkward and so funny and she just Normas her way through it like she can't hear the *blumpty-blumpty* music of the *America's Funniest Home Videos* contender she and the cart are currently producing.

Jake: "Okay, well, if I need anything else -- like to sex murder you -- I'll just come to the office, okay?"

Norma: "Sounds great!"

ROMERO

The distractingly beautiful lady finally lets Norma in to see the Sheriff, and his affect is so cold and unmoved -- and literally unmoving -- that you get this *Muppet Babies* feeling of maybe they are just using the same footage of him staring at her crazy ass the entire time she's melting down.

Norma's agenda is to get onto the City Planning Committee with his help, so she can shoot down this highway thing that's been hanging over her head but to which -- until Shelby died -- she couldn't turn her full attention. Now my guess is that she is doing this out of a friends-help-friends thing, like, she's not even *trying* to pressure Romero out of anything other than the goodness of his heart and the fact that they are suddenly best friends. Romero sees it differently, and honestly I think he might be right, but it just suits my aesthetic more that she would be this deluded.

Romero's agenda is quite different: He doesn't want to see this lady, or talk to this lady, or do this lady favors because first of all his ass his dirty -- if we didn't know that before, we'll know it by episode's end -- and second of all he didn't cover up Shelby's murder as a favor to her. Both of which things are of course stupid obvious, but both of which too you can see Norma Bates being confused about: Men are objects, to be rejected from the home unless they prove of use. Some of them have belts you need, or carpet fibers, and others are your kids when it suits you. And while this is a sad and broken perspective, it's one men have spent her entire life teaching her.

For as long as he spends staring at her, and she spends digging herself deeper and deeper, when it goes to shit it goes fast: "Are you trying to say that you *have something on me*? Is that it? Because if you did, that really wouldn't be good for you, okay? I mean I might have to burn you down to the ground, you know? Don't ever try to intimidate me. Don't walk into my office and ask me for political favors based on nothing. You and I have no connection. We're not on the same playing field. Don't ever assume that we are. *You don't know what you're doing*. Go home, Mrs. Bates."

She gets that lady-on-the-bus hurt feeling in her eyes -- that Actual Schizophrenic confusion that Farmiga somehow always nails -- because she honestly didn't see that coming, but it's still weird and sad even after seven episodes to see her grasp this eminently awful fact once again, that even the safe places aren't safe. Like when Dylan was like, "You know I'm still moving out and/or kidnapping your son, right?" when she thought he was onboard for her whole shitshow.

And you know her ass isn't even out of the building before Principal Hudgins calls to tell her about Norman flailing his way AWOL. It is, of course, very exhausting probably to be around Norma or to be in her orbit, but one thing we don't really consider very often other than in these recaps is how fucking exhausting it must be to *actually be Norma*. Home's infested with sex murderers and constantly disappointing children, this cop station has never done right by her, school is always up her ass, that one lady at the restaurant was a total cooze, Norman's this close to killing people and having seizures all the time... Good Lord. She needs a nap, but where could she even possibly go to take a nap?

REMO

Remo: "Did you find out what a trimmer is?"

Dylan: "Yes, on the internet. It is exactly what it sounds like."

Remo: "Then I am going to have to find some other way to salvage my carny dignity."

DEKODY

Emma: "Missed you at school today! I'm just looking up weird things on the internet with my gigantic beautiful eyeballs."

Norman: "Yeah, I went home early. I wasn't feeling well. Not like you, just unwell."

Emma: "Feeling better now?"

Norman: "Hey, just apropos of nothing, what in the actual fuck were you thinking?"

Emma: "Right. About that, see, I'm sorry. But they are bitches. I was sticking up for..."

Norman: "Yeah, but *Bradley* is upset. I can't really see past whatever woman I'm obsessing on, it's kind of my thing."

But then because he is Norman and basically perfect, he goes back to being awesome: "Don't ever tell anyone something I tell you in confidence again, okay?" I mean, that's direct and polite, and a rational request. How could you say no to that? Especially when all the things he tells her in confidence are *super fucked-up things*.

PARENT/TEACHER

Had Norman attended Lang Arts today with Miss Watson rather than swatting at her like a fly, he would have learned all about a very famous poem by Edgar Allan Poe, called "Alone," which has a couple of famous lines in it -- the last line in particular, you see that referenced a lot -- but is actually about how being super weird makes you lonely because you can't see the good stuff everybody else sees because you have the burden of seeing the not-so-great stuff they can't.

*From childhood's hour I have not been/ As others were; I have not seen
As others saw; I could not bring / My passions from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken / My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone; / And all I loved, I loved alone.
Then -- in my childhood, in the dawn / Of a most stormy life -- was drawn
From every depth of good and ill / The mystery which binds me still...
[Nature nature nature, à la Byron, c.f. **Patrick's Rune**
...From the thunder and the storm, / And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue) / Of a demon in my view.*

It's a trade-off, but it's not a trade anybody actually makes: You're born with it. Or at least that's Norma's fear. Norman isn't there yet.

Principal: "I have no way of knowing how little interest you have in authority figures today, but listen. Your kid is a timebomb."

Norma: "He is perfectly lovely. Go fuck yourself. He came home, he was sick."

Miss Watson: "Sick in the head, maybe. He freaked me out so bad my hair went Rogue."

Norma: "Did you put your hands on my son? A student?"

Miss Watson: "No doubt I am creepy in some way, but don't put this on me."

Miss Watson: "We have psychologists right here at the school that could just go digging the fuck around in your son's brain whenever they..."

Norma: "NO WAY. Let me put him in therapy. Somebody I have chosen, somebody I can blackmail or have sex with, somebody who will let me run the session as though they have not been literally trained in their profession to avoid letting me do that."

Miss Watson: "Sure, why not? Tell me who, when you find one."

Norma, scooting out the door: "I will make sure to not do that at all."

WHO DO YOU LOVE?

Me, I love Remo. Actually, I love Dylan with my whole heart, but Remo's just so great. Cigarettes and motor oil. (His kid is also an actor on this show, somebody named Gunner, but I don't remember meeting him yet. Maybe he's the kid in the blue plaid shirt that was teleporting madly around the school and managed to walk past Bradley and Norman eleven separate times in their scene.)

Dylan: "I am a growing boy! I need sleep, not just more and more alcohol until things get weird."

Remo: "We are doing the latter! Two more shots for me and my 'boss.'"

Dylan: "I get that you resent me, but I don't know that getting super weird is going to fix it."

Remo: "And yet, I am way ahead of you and already being weird. And rude."

Dylan: "Maybe your career has been stymied by your very clear case of alcoholism."

Remo: "Maybe I should punch you and we can roll around on the floor, covered in peanut shells and broken glass and face blood shooting out of our faces!"

It's not a suggestion so much as a Coming Attractions, and once they roll to the middle and start quietly bleeding, you think maybe it's going to be okay. This is what men do. This is like what Norma thinks everything is like all the time, just gross sweaty guys rolling around in the dirt with semi-chubs, angry about who knows what.

Remo: "Better watch out for me, Golden Boy. I'll try to destroy you."

And it feels like a kiss!

Later on, they sort of slump as a single bloody entity up to their motel room, and Remo explains the actual deal, which is a very sympathetic and easy to understand story.

"Once I was the Dylan, or I thought I was. The Boss gave me a shot, like that time you ran over a teenage junkie child, and I failed to exhibit leadership potential. It has turned me -- over twenty-three years which is longer than you have been alive -- into the very sexy, very tiny mess you see before you."

Dylan: "Gil's been jerking you around that long?"

Remo: "No, the real boss. The one Jacob thinks is Romero."

Dylan: "So why not assert your rights as skilled labor? Or go get some other horrible job for horrible people like us?"

Remo: "Blood in blood out, Golden Boy. You don't quit, you retire. And our retirement plan is to be exploded or set on fire. It's not so much that I resent you out of ambition, it's that I am in a trap no less

confining than when your mom was dating Shelby, and being your underling is just one more in the series of punishments that defines my life."

Dylan, you should be nicer to Remo. Blood's a rover. It is not that hard to make a Beta feel like an Alpha, and it is now your *mission* to do so. Not out of the kindness of your heart, either: He is turning you into a personal symbol faster than Norman did Bradley, and you see how shitty that gets for everybody.

BATES MOTEL

Norman: "Mother, I must apologize in advance for what I am about to tell you..."

Norma: "Skipping school? I covered for you, kind of. Tell me what happened, please."

Norman: "I cannot do that. But it won't happen again. I'll black out or kill somebody or scratch terrifying messages to myself in the wood of my school desk, but whatever happens I will spare you further indignity."

Norma: "See, it's not the indignity so much as the fact as they want you to see a therapist."

Norman: "How is that possibly a bad thing?"

Norma: "Trust me, we don't want this. You cannot be on record as a crazy, or else our lives will once again come tumbling down on us, just like in the garage that fateful day."

Norman: "Cool, I can totally do normal. Don't even worry about it, lady. Hey, will you give me a ride to my taxidermy internship? I can't wait to pull the guts out of dead animals and preserve them with glassy eyes that can see into a future of only blood."

Norma: "...Sure, let me get my coat."

DEKODY

Norman: "Professor Quirrell, this is my mother, her name is Mother."

Will: "You can call me Will."

Norma: "Nice to meet you! Can I talk to you for a second like I'm not freaking out?"

Norman heads back through a curtain, and you can see his little feet twirling around a desk chair, and it is the sweetest thing in the whole world.

Norma: "You know this is crazy fucked up, right?"

Will: "The Dark Arts have their naysayers..."

Norma: "I mean, they're on my jock about him being normal, and this is the opposite of that. This is the definition of being a fucking freak."

Will: "Um."

Norma: "I mean, you're great. You're aging into a great beauty, somehow. And I'm sure you aren't freaky, I mean, so what you're a taxidermist and your daughter's dying..."

Will: "Side note, I got back into taxidermy once her mom split, so that's actually kind of a thing. Our whole house is about death, which is funny because we are 100 percent cooler and less freaky than your whole deal."

Norma: "Well, okay, maybe your pride will work. You know, this is a hard business. Not everybody can be as good at it as you are. I always saw Norman as more of a ladies' shoe salesman, or if he goes really

nuts, an OB/GYN."

Will: "Not many people write poetry, but we still have to have poets, right?"

Norma: "Do we, though?"

(Actually that was a cheap shot: In my personal experience, any gyno born after around 1965-70 is a delight. I mean, I'm not exactly reporting from ground zero on this one, but I have met a lot of doctors in my lifetime and I have been charmed enough by your younger dude ones -- and of course the lady ones -- that my first thought is still that they seem great. Maybe they have to be, so you won't run screaming. All I know is, I don't meet enough of them, due to not having a compelling reason to do so.)

Will: "In fact he is good at it. And he's good company. And we're not hurting anybody, the animals are already dead, there's not much else you can do to them. If this is his passion... What can go wrong with encouraging that?"

Future Ghost Norma: "Spoiler alert!"

FORTUNA

Whatever you're imagining about a group of young people whose seasonal employment involves trimming huge pot harvests, you are correct. One hottie's got cool orange pants and a high-and-tight -- looks like one of those candyflipper Euro guys you meet in hostels who are like a DJ as their whole entire thing and you're like, "But how?" -- but the rest of them it's just patchouli and dreads and one million offensive Burning Man details.

Remo: "Ugh, see that one with the guitar? Leave him. He sucks worse than is worth it."

Dylan: "I think we can leave those decisions up to Human Resources, Remo."

Remo: "You seriously have no idea how much this guy sucks, but whatever. Fuck it."

Dylan: "Dylan Texas, you are *crushing* this management thing. Well done, sir."

DEKODY

Norman: "You are so good at sticking pins in my dog's eyeholes to hold in the glass eyes!"

Will: "I gave it up for a while, Emma's mom didn't like it. Or me. Or our sick daughter. But after she ditched us, I got back into it real hardcore."

Norman: "Sorry about your, um, entire life."

Will: "I left it back in Manchester, where all hugely depressing lives belong! I got my daughter and we flew away. Just like when your mom bought that motel, am I right? No consequences!"

REVOLUTION NO. 9

Because she has not done nearly enough to endanger herself this week, Norma thinks the sensible thing to do would be to follow Jake to wherever his sketchy ass wants to go. Norma, are you trained in the subtle evasive arts? I didn't think so. I'm guessing a professional sex murderer knows when he's being tailed.

He leads her to the *Seafairer* and she watches from the shadows as he looks all over for any misplaced or unlabeled teen sex slaves, but it comes up snake-eyes. So he's in even more of a terrible mood than his usual hulking menace mood when he finally catches Norma in the act of catching him in the act.

Jake: "Norma, this is not a situation that requires concierge service. What is up?"

Norma: "What's up is, what is up? Why are you all up in my business?"

Jake: "You know exactly what is up, you know I'm a sex murderer and a slave trader and uh, you were fucking Zach Shelby, and you totally killed Keith Summers. I know everything!"

Norma: "I have no idea what any of those words mean."

Jake: "Listen, Keith Summers was an idiot. But he was also on the bottom rung. And I am on the top rung, okay? Do you understand what I'm saying?"

Norma: "Nope, I still don't understand words!"

Jake: "Norma, I am going to kill you. Just kill the *shit* out of you."

Norma: "Is that code for something? Do you have enough little soaps?"

Jake: "Okay, when you stop doing whatever this is -- which it's weirding me out, so good job there -- you come by my motel room, okay? You remember what number it is?"

THERAPY

Vancouver Bingo! The therapist was **Cyrus Xander**, Eric Stoltz's science business partner guy. I remember I really liked him and he was always right about everything, but then something happened. I don't remember what. Probably something to do with robots, I'm guessing.

Cyrus Xander: "Tell me a little bit about losing your father?"

Norman: "He died. We moved."

Norma: "It was devastating! But we moved, and we moved on, and we are reinventing ourselves! As a woman who has overcome a lot in her life!"

Cyrus: "Did you know that this is Norman's therapy?"

Norma: "What. What'd I say?"

Cyrus: "Your words, coming out of your mouth. In his session."

Norma: "Not sure what you're suggesting..."

Cyrus: "Norman *specifically*, how did it feel to move here?"

Norma: "Oh my God, it was so sad!"

Cyrus: "Norma..."

Norma: "For him! We're talking about him, right? Therapy is great, this is really helping. Him."

TRIMMERS

Guitar guy SUCKS. Dylan cannot take it, Remo cannot take it. Guitar guy feels them getting angrier and angrier and starts pulling this Norma Rae shit about how they need to be treated better and where is their Taco Bell and shit, and finally Dylan just tells Remo to pull over.

Dylan: "Get the fuck out of the van."

Guitar: "Why, so I can watch you piss?"

Dylan: "Ugh! *Why are you like this?*"

Guitar: "We are the 99 percent!"

Dylan: "I will shoot you in the motherfucking head. Okay?"

Guitar: "Fine. Taco Bell can wait."

Dylan: "No, Blood's a rover. I am going to shoot you execution style."

Eventually he does not actually shoot Guitar Guy execution style -- but he sure as hell leaves him on the side of the road with his guitar, after gracefully slamming the doors closed with his broken arm while he leaves the gun trained on him with the other one. Even Remo is like, *That was a little bit amazing*. I like it when people appreciate Dylan, even when it's because he's being naughty.

THERAPY

Cyrus: "Well, that was a fucking waste of time. See you next week? Alone?"

Norma: "We'll see. I figure just coming here was us doing the universe a favor."

Cyrus: "Can I speak to you privately? Norman, there's a desk chair out there you can spin around in, if you want to be the cutest thing that ever happened some more."

Cyrus: "Lady, you are *killing* me. What is the deal?"

Norma: "Well I'm *certainly* not about to let you do your job. What kind of mother would I be if I let you help my fragile, damaged son find peace?"

Cyrus: "Have you ever been in therapy?"

Norma: "What the fuck do *you* think? *Look* at me."

Cyrus: "I think you should be in like a thousand hours of therapy a week."

Norma: "*Why on Earth would you think that?*"

Cyrus: "Look, to me it seems like this is about controlling your son and his entire world."

Norma: "It's partly that, but I also have actual reasons for ruining this experiment in mental health."

Cyrus: "You know, sometimes people -- not you, just people -- have to control everything they can because inside they feel totally out of control."

Norma: "Yeah those people sound really sick, doc."

Cyrus: "You don't ever feel that way? Not even like just a little bit?"

"I feel completely in control of everything in my life. How dare you make these stupid assumptions about me? You don't know anything about me. I work hard, I take care of my son, I know what's right and what's wrong for him. No one pushes me around! I control my own life! I'm in *total control of my own life!* I have *a lot going on!* I have a lot to deal with! But I do not feel powerless! EVER!"

Cyrus: "...Holy *shit*."

Norma: "Get your panties, Norman, we're *blowin'* this popstand!"

Of course Norman immediately wants a performance evaluation, like, he just sat there quietly in the best possible way he could, and the amazing beautiful manic smile she flashes at him -- "You were PERFECT!" -- is so incredible that you somehow feel like oxygen has returned to the atmosphere. Because in a way it

has. She said what she needed to say, and effectively and decisively has ended treatment. Definitely for the Bateses, but possibly the entire profession.

BATES MOTEL

Jake: "Why Mrs. Bates, welcome! I'd offer you a drink, but this is a shitty motel."

Norma: "Take your cash and get out. Momma's on a roll, motherfucker."

She throws the money at him like a common street whore, and all of a sudden he grows about three feet and darkens the sky and it is just awful.

Jake: "I know you did not just throw money at me."

Norma: "I still don't know anything or who you are or what a sex murder club is, but we do not have future business! This relationship is severed!"

Jake: "Oh, no it is not."

Norma: "Blee blah blee! Argh! I have fucking had it with these motherfucking men in my motherfucking life!"

Jake: "You need to dial it way the fuck back, lady. I'm telling you this as a favor."

Norma: "Okay, fine. Still kind of on a rush from when I ate the face off that therapist. But listen, seriously. Do you want me to call the cops and tell them how you are a sex murderer and how I have been turning a blind eye to it because I have no idea what is going on right now?"

Jake: "What about you fucking Zack Shelby?"

Norma: "*You* go fuck Zack Shelby, how do you like them apples? I'm not afraid of you! You have no power over me!"

Jake: "Lady I'm not the Goblin King, I am a sex slaver and I will totally kill you."

Norma: "I will call the police if you don't pack your shit about bounce! GO! GO! GO!"

Jake: "Um, fine. See you in about a hot second when you realize I'm totally in with them too because how else would I get the *[spoiler]* I'm about to leave in your house. For such a smart lady you sure don't get how this town works at all. Which is funny because you are the main person we've been putting on this show for, and you never seem to pick up on it."

DEKODY

Emma: "Norman, if you're going to be living here half the time I think we should clear the air. It's going to be tough to be each other's only friend if you're gonna keep prissing out whenever I show up."

Norman: "Yeah, you're right. What's up?"

Emma: "They were being bitches about *you*. Specifically that Bradley would never in a million years fuck you because you are pathetic and weird. It pissed me off because I think you are so special, and so much better than any of them, and I just couldn't keep my mouth shut. So I'm sorry."

Norman: "Now *that* is a fucking apology, sister. Well done."

"Not finished. I wanted to clear the facts up also because I didn't want you to think I had ulterior motives. Yes, I am in love with you. Yes, I'm comfortable with you knowing that because I am a fucking saint and the coolest person in the world. But I don't have any expectations of you because of that because -- unlike you, apparently -- I understand that just wanting somebody to like you back is not the same thing as them having to do so. So we are friends, okay? You are incredibly special to me, and I feel safe with you, and I don't have any other friends, which doesn't bother me because you are still the best one. My entire life is about managing expectations, so please do me the solid of not assuming you can read my mind: Trust me, I will tell you what is on my mind. And right now, those expectations are managed, and I'm not trying to manipulate you or do anything other than what I am actually doing, right in front of you, which is being awesome as *hell*."

Norman: "Ten-four, Emma Dekody. I have never not been fucked around, so I was unfamiliar with the process. Now c'mere, you big lug."

Will walks in on them hugging -- every bit as complex and beautiful as Norma and Dylan, frankly, considering how balls-out Emma is about everything -- and gets the dad-chuckles about it, and they're both like, "Don't worry about it! Just hugging."

BATES MOTEL

Speaking of normal, not-particularly-gendered fun, Norma is so thrilled when Dylan (somewhat guiltily, though he has no idea what's been going on today) shows up with his twelve trimmers, that she randomly asks him on a date! It's incredibly cute.

Dylan: "What happened to No. 9?"

Norma: "Oh, you were so right about that guy. So I just fucking *handled* it. Like a *boss*."

Dylan: "Well done, Norma. I'm sure this won't bite us all in the ass. Anyway, about my creepy hippie friends, there's something you should..."

Norma: "I'll go get their keys! And hey listen, Dylan? You know I love you, right?"

Dylan: "I did not."

Norma: "Well, more importantly Norman is having dinner at the Dekodys, so I've got an open boyfriend slot. No promises that I'll be nice to you tomorrow, but do you want to get a bite?"

Dylan: (*Is essentially speechless.*)

Norma: "Great! I'll go put on some weird dress!"

But when she gets upstairs, and finds Zack Shelby's dead body laid out on her bed, it's not Dylan's name she runs around in circles screaming. It never is.

NEXT WEEK

Number Nine returns, offering to kill both her kids before doing some dreadful thing to Norma herself. Hopefully we'll get a couple more rungs, considering there's only two episodes left and I really want to know who the Big Bad is, and -- since the sex and drugs and vigilantism all have a proven common root at this point -- figure out how Norma plans to deal with *finally* realizing that WPB is actually hell on earth. And just as suspensefully whether or not Norman and Dylan will go with, "we fucking told you so"

or the much more likely, "We no longer feel like moving out of town now that we have families and lives that are not solely about you."

Underwater, 109

"What You Feel Is What You Are"

PREVIOUSLY

Bradley was like, "You know we're not dating, right?" And Emma was like, "You know you're not dating her, right?" And Norman was all, "Yeah no, yeah." But the truth was quite the opposite. Bradley had to make *double* sure that they were totally not dating, which resulted in him almost murdering her, but by the fourth or fifth time she dumped him he was starting to grasp what is going on. (Just kidding, he still only barely grasps it.) Dylan has produced for their mother a whole motel's worth of cute gross hippies for the marijuana processing that White Pine Bay runs on, but the sinister sex-slaver Jake Abernathy -- just the latest in a very long line of disappointing men to traipse past Norma Bates's window -- ruined even that fragile truce by leaving her autopsied ex-boyfriend's corpse in her bed. In her bed!

UP THE HILL

Orange Pants Hottie has been joined by Canadian Andrew Garfield Hottie -- one of whom has to be Remo's kid in real life? -- and all the hippies are watching the cops drag Shelby's body out of the house and down the hill for the second time.

Norma: "I was just about to go on a date with my distant second-choice son, and..."

Romero: "Any idea who would bring your boyfriend's dead body back to your house and put it in your bed?"

Norma: "Ordinarily I would say Zach Shelby, just a classic Zach Shelby Move, but I really don't think it was him this time. My new person who is constantly ruining my life is Jake Abernathy, an old friend of Shelby's and Keith Summers and presumably Gil and presumably you, who told me last week pretty explicitly, *I am going to ruin your life in various ways such as putting dead bodies in your upstairs bedrooms, and the like.*"

Romero: "No, I'm sure these are all just random coincidences. But if you'd like to give me Abernathy's obviously fake information..."

"I THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY! LIKE WHY? WHY DO CRAZY PEOPLE KEEP GRAVITATING TOWARDS ME?"

Everybody on the show stares awkwardly at the floor and tries not to point out, or even think about, the fact that Norma Bates is *easily* the craziest person any of them have ever met or even heard of.

LATER

Dylan: "And now we have to throw out the mattress too? Just because some autopsied dude might have leaked on it?"

Norman: "I hear you, but I also never had a boyfriend accidentally rape me and then turn up dead in my bed after being autopsied. Possibly we don't have all the facts of what she's going through."

Dylan: "Uh, considering how long she's going to be bitching and moaning and perseverating and talking talking about this, eventually we might."

Norma: "I can hear you! And I am acting *totally appropriate!*"

SNIFF SNIFF

Norma: "Hippy youth culture! Stop smoking doobies on my porch!"

Trimmers: "What did she say? What is happening?"

Norma: "Your wacky weed!"

Trimmers: "Did you know you live in the WPB?"

Norma: "I know! It is kind of getting to me! You, Andrew Garfield one, what is your name?"

Ra'uf: "Ra'uf."

Norma: "Fuck you."

"I had an idea when I moved here of how life was gonna be. Life can be disappointing, sure. But no one prepared me for the colossal fucking face-dive off a cliff into a bottomless pit of hellish bullshit that coming to this monster town has turned out to be. Whatever that dumb old therapist says, I don't *need* therapy and I am totally under control and this goddamn motel is under my control and you will goddamn not be *smoking drugs on the motherfucking porch of it*. Copy?"

Hippies: "Whoa, you are *awesome*."

Ra'uf: "But you slightly need to chill."

Norma: "YOU chill. You chill your OWN ass."

Hippies: "This is the best lady I ever saw in my whole life."

Norma: "Dylan! What have you wrought?"

Dylan: "They are laborers. They are of the labor class."

Norma: "And how do they labor?"

Dylan: "They toil, dear mother, in the fields."

Norma: "Fields of what?"

Dylan: "You know goddamn well. Why are you being so weird right now?"

Norma: "I HATE THIS PLACE! HATE IT! MY LIFE IS A MISTAKE! THIS TOWN IS A PRISON! A NIGHTMARE! I AM GETTING THE FUCK OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE PRISON OF A TOWN!"

Norman: "Hold up, what?"

Norma: "We are gonna start over, son. It's gonna be..."

Norman: "There's a pattern here maybe we should explore, where you kind of always want to do this. Like, you take your crazy with you everywhere you go, you realize that? It doesn't mean you're not still in the same..."

"I got raped DAY ONE. Committed MURDER. Then my boyfriend forced me to have sex with him in a variety of locations so that we all wouldn't go to jail. Then we discovered that he was keeping doped-up sex slaves in *his secret basement*. Then you lost your VIRGINITY. At what point, Norman, at what point can we possibly say *Maybe this time Norma's not being a flake, maybe this one time Norma has a legitimate concern*. Because if not now, when? If not multiple murders and sexual assaults, WHAT IS IT GOING TO TAKE?"

INTERLUDE

On the downside, Norman has a pretty involved dream about drowning Bradley in the bathtub. A calm lake in a world of concrete. On the upside, when he wakes up he is ashamed, frightened and above all does not masturbate. Which I guess the fact that I was worried about that says, perhaps, more about me than the boy.

MOTEL OFFICE

Emma: "Hey, I came in early to organize your office. It is disordered just like your mind."

Norma: "Just throw everything out except the deed and the land and stuff like that. Everything else, burn it. We don't need to know."

Emma: "Uh, okay. I will be doing the opposite of that because I am Emma Dekody, but it's nice to know which Norma we're dealing with today."

Norma: "If those hippies start smoking their doobies and roaches while I'm gone, freak out on them."

Emma: "You know we live in the WPB, right? And I'm kind of shy with hot hippies."

Norma: "Just act super fucking crazy. Like you know how I am? Do that."

Emma: "And what if they say for example, No? *No, Tank Girl, I am going to keep smoking this doobie.*"

Norma: "I don't know. Climb up on something and holler like your whole body's going to shake apart, that's what I'd do. Or drive crazy donuts in the parking lot. Pretty much anything that will simultaneously get their attention and make it clear you cannot be reasoned with."

A cute gay Canadian man brings a delivery of flowers! Norma's so out of it today that for a second she's like, "How nice! How nice that a... Wait, I don't have any friends or anyone that would get me flowers. My dead boyfriend already got carried outta here twice, and all my husbands... Possibly they are from Norman? But more likely they are from Jake Abernathy and they are a mobster message. A fragrant horse's head."

Norma: "Emma, throw this shit out. I won't have murder message flowers in the office on top of everything else. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to call Sheriff Romero and leave him an urgent message that somebody sent me flowers. A very serious crime."

SOME STREET

Bradley: "Dylan, hey."

Dylan: "Oh, are we already at the part where we do it, and Norman goes crazy?"

Bradley: "Could you sneak me into my dad's office over at Gil's drug warehouse? I miss him very bad! And I thought if I could just see where the corruption went down, like how he kept his desk and everything, it would give me solace."

Dylan: "Yeah, like what could you possibly find at your dad's drug-dealer job -- that got him killed by being burned alive -- that might freak you out?"

REAL ESTATE MATT

One of the best parts of the episode is how Norma walks through doors when she is pissed off, which is like... Imagine a saloon door, like you have to throw both sides wide, and then walk through before it swings back? But doing that with normal doors. Like she doesn't give a fuck if it latches properly on its own behind her because she has *had it*. It's like that door was never there; like she destroyed it with her mind-rage.

Matt: "Oh shit, it's Norma Bates. Can I call you back, Jason? This is going to get weird."

Jason: "How come?"

Matt: "I do not know yet. But I guarantee it is going to get weird."

Norma: "I am here to get weird!"

Matt: "How come?"

Norma: "You knew about that highway bypass and you sold me that property anyway."

Matt: "It was a proposal, one of many, at that time."

Norma: "Do you want to look in these crazy eyes every day for a year when I take you to court?"

Matt: "Ideally no."

Norma: "Then you get me my money back."

If only there were some kind of escrow stipulation about like, *the party of the first part blah blah rape camp blah blah human slavery*. Anyway, Matt knows that whatever happens next, he does not want Norma coming back in there because she is the kind of lady that will assault you with her purse. Not just once, to make a point, but several times, and like, aggravated.

MISS WATSON

Miss Watson: "Norman, that short story you turned in, it's incredible! I especially liked the part where the pretty teacher molested the young boy."

Norman: "Thought ya might."

Miss Watson: "I have a friend who has a small literary publication, and I'd like to send it to him. It will be published and you will become famous! A literary supernova. But first, we need to edit it together. Long hours, all alone, after school, unsupervised. Just you, me, a peekaboo bra, and the English language."

Norman: "Just FYI, I might also bring my other personality which is a sex murderer."

Miss Watson: "Mee-yow! Me too, lol."

BACK HOME

Norma's got two problems. Well. She's got like a hundred problems. But right now they are: She has a serious killer on her ass for reasons she still doesn't even understand, and this dumb highway also, but mostly the first one. So she's a little tweaky, a little paranoid. *She needs some of that ganja from those hot hippies*, I thought, and then I remembered that I already act like Norma Bates a lot of the time and pot makes it a lot worse, which is why I don't smoke pot, so if Norma smoked pot she would be more like Norma Bates than she is now, which sounds amazing but only from behind bulletproof, soundproof, double-sided mirror glass. (Also: "ganja"? Is that something people say? Did I make that up? Did you know it's *Sanskrit*? And what are "dank nuggets"? That does *not* sound appealing.)

Norma: "I know what you're thinking, obsessing on locking all the doors and windows is kind of insane. But let me remind you that the man formerly in No. 9 is now at large and *oh Christ what is that awful thing in your hands?*"

Norman: "This is Juno. She used to be my dog. Now she is merely a symptom."

Norma: "We are getting the eff out of this town. It's gonna be great!!"

Norman: "I have a 4.0 and I'm becoming a literary supernova. We're not leaving."

Norma: "Raped! DAY ONE!"

NORMAN'S BDRM AKA NORMANSLAND

Dylan: "Hey, why are you Googling 'I drowned a slut in my dream' and *oh Christ what is that awful thing on your bed?*"

Norman: "This is Juno. She used to be my dog. Now she's more of a cry for help. That nobody seems to hear."

Dylan: "And the first part?"

Norman: "Remember that girl I was in love with, and you engineered me to go sleep with her, and then I almost killed her? Well, I've been dreaming about killing her. Maybe it's just a metaphor."

Dylan: "Yeah, why wouldn't it be? I certainly don't know any secrets about you, that even you don't know, that would cause me to think otherwise."

Norman: "I guess I just feel overwhelmed. I bet Norma drowns people all night, every night."

Dylan: "Right, because you'd never hurt anybody, right? In real life? With meat tenderizers or on their front lawns or anything? Beat anybody over the head? And you'd be willing to remind your other personalities of that? And how much I love you also?"

Norman: "*Just you!* Kidding. *Not kidding!* Totally kidding."

GIL'S WAREHOUSE

Dylan: "Gil? Are you in this pitch-black warehouse among these pot plants?"

Gil: "How are your hippies working out?"

Dylan: "Listen, did Jerry Martin have an office space here?"

Gil: "Your unceasing ambition, it rankles and impresses."

Dylan: "I just want to snoop around in it and have secrets."

Gil: "Take his office, I don't care. I burned that motherfucker alive, I don't care what happens. Trash everything, see if I care."

Dylan: "Then so, like Emma Dekody, I will not be doing that. And thank you. If this works out right, my little brother will kill absolutely all of us."

BATES MOTEL

Emma: "Hey, cutest hippie? Can you not smoke pot? I don't know if you're aware, but there is an insane lady."

Ra'uf: "Oh me? I don't smoke pot! Hey, do you want to smoke some pot?"

Emma: "I have an oxygen tank that will explode if we smoke pot."

Ra'uf: "Oh, Marilla. How much you miss."

MISS WATSON

"He felt like he was choking inside on some black smoke."

Miss Watson: "I love this image, of choking inside on some black smoke. But if we move it to the bottom of this paragraph, your psycho tendencies might be more artful."

Norman: "It is fantastic that you are showing so much approval of my story."

Miss Watson: "A man who is on fire from the inside! I do love it."

Norman: "I just thought it was interesting in a way that has nothing to do with myself, consciously. Like, how do you go through daily life on fire, and nothing will put it out?"

Miss Watson: "For me, taking inappropriate interest in my young students helps. Listen, you're very mature for your age."

Norman: "It's from being systematically abused my entire life!"

Miss Watson, verbatim: "I just feel like you understand things that are way beyond your years, things about how hard life can be, about how we're not really meant to be happy..."

Norman: "Miss Watson, you seem sad. Like you are also on fire and wanting things you can't have."

Miss Watson: "It is just my love of the English language. And the Arts thereupon."

Norman: "Are you going to ask me to kill your husband at some point? That's generally what happens in this movie."

Miss Watson: "Oh shit, you're a minor. I totally forgot. You're going to need your mom's permission to publish this story about how you are clearly a crazy person."

Norman: "I do not see that happening."

"SLIDE (ACOUSTIC VERSION)"

The hippies play Goo Goo Dolls because hippies are the worst, but listen:

Don't you love the life you killed?

Don't suppose I'll ever know what it means to be a man

It's something I can't change

Romero: "Are you guys working at Gil's dry dock that I don't know about?"

Hippies: "Yes, would you like fresh veggies?"

Romero: "No thank you, I am investigating a very serious flower crime."

Norma: "Sheriff, here is the card where Jake Abernathy says *See you soon*. It is a code, it means *I am going to kill you for messing up my sex slavery*."

Romero: "I notice that he didn't sign it 'Jake Abernathy.'"

Norma: "No, but who else could have sent it? Everybody else is dead."

Romero: "Shit, I don't know your personal business."

Norma: "THIS IS DEFINITELY A CLUE. Also, he's staking me out again. Driving by in that black car of murder, all day long, like he's got nothing else to do now that I have ruined his flesh-trade career."

Romero: "Oh, plus obviously Jake Abernathy doesn't exist. It's a shine-on, dame. The old switcheroo."

Norma: "Too bad I scrubbed off all his fingerprints and DNA during one of my 'sodes. And then gave the room to that filth out there."

Romero: "You know, it's sort of funny that you went into the service industry."

Norma: "I am keen to serve people! I just wish they weren't always trying to kill me and smoking doobies and raping everybody all the time."

Romero: "For a very understandably paranoid person, you didn't write down his plates or save his creepy hairs or anything whatsoever. You are not good at this part of my job."

Norma: "But how will you save me? From the man that doesn't exist? You know how hard it is for me to trust people, men and authority figures."

Romero: "I will have you patrolled every half-hour. Which I would imagine won't last very long before you have killed yet another person in your house."

Norma: "Okay, well, if any other literal dead bodies show up, I'll call ya."

Romero: "I know. I know that you will."

DINER

Dylan: "Hello, Bradl..."

Bradley: "When are you going to get me into my dad's office?"

Dylan: "And so we dispense with the preliminaries. Listen, maybe I could just box up all his drug-dealer crap and bring it to you, and that way Gil would be forced to kill us both."

Bradley: "It's not about anything in particular. Well, there's a pocketwatch I'm kind of fixated on, but mostly it's about being in the actual space. How he left things. My mom already did the boxing-up thing, like, immediately. It left me untethered."

Dylan: "The thing is Gil kind of hated your dad by the end. You know how he was set on fire and then aimed at you in a speeding car?"

Bradley: "Figure it out, mister. I'm just gonna be over here looking awesome and untouchable and unknowable, embodying the pathetic desires of men who haven't fully developed emotionally, as is the way of things."

Dylan: "Okay fine, let's go."

BATES MOTEL

Wrong number, and then before you know it Emma is chowing down on the obvious pot muffin that Cute Hippie Ra'uf has left her that is going to get her high. This is the best television show in the whole, whole world of television. Like the look of wonder and amazement that is constantly in her giant beautiful eyes isn't going to be twice as fabulous once she gets that edible down.

UP THE HILL

Norma: "In breaking news, we are moving to Oahu! It is very safe there, and near to a beach. Nobody will come looking for us, and we will be safe and all alone. Don't tell Dylan!"

Norman: "I am not doing this with you. A Hawaii cottage sounds delicious, Mother, but I have a real life here."

Norma: "It's especially safe because it's an island!"

Norman: "Okay, that was hilarious. But..."

Norma: "And we've been running a motel so we have management experience..."

Norman: "Literally for three days we have been doing this. In which fairly short time we have committed multiple homicides. I don't know that the service industry is..."

Norma: "Whatever, I will just tell lies to everyone like usual."

They get into a fight and Norman eventually goes back into the mode where he just -- terrified by himself, on the verge of breaking down -- keeps repeating over and over that she is crazy and scary and doesn't make any sense, etc. Which is when Emma shows up, with eyes like whirling jewels.

Emma: "I think there might be video monitoring equipment in the office."

Norma: "That is totally something I would buy!"

Emma: "I felt like I was being watched. It was really creeping me out."

Norma: "Like by whom?"

Emma: "I don't know. God? I got lonely. I grabbed my tank and headed up here to see you guys, see what you were up to. And man, you know stairs? Stairs. There were like a million of 'em!"

Norma, gettin' up close: "...Not that it rules out the spy cams, but you are high as shit."

Emma: "Like it was an escalator, that you climb -- Hi! -- and one more step just kept coming, out of nowhere. Like I was in space!"

Norma: "Do CF kids smoke pot?"

Emma: "I ate it. It was a cupcake from a hippie. Frankly I don't see the appeal."

Norma: "Norman, go make her some toast. You can mess with her head if you want, but nothing, like, scathing."

Norman: "I'm sorry I called you crazy, Mother..."

Norma: "Oh, who cares? My real daughter is on drugs!"

WAREHOUSE

Remo immediately starts shooting at Bradley and Dylan from out in the darkness.

Dylan: "Stop shooting! It's me, Dylan [Texas]! Do you hear me?"

Remo: "Oh my God, you are so dumb. What are you even doing here? And who is the other person with you who I am going to kill?"

Bradley: "It is me! I am too beautiful to kill. Plus bullets would just go through me like a mirage, probably."

Remo: "Are you Jerry Martin's kid? Sorry we set your dad on fire."

Dylan: "Look, she just wants to go through all of our corrupt drug-dealing documents, it's no big deal."

Remo: "Really? Because that sounds like a bad idea."

Dylan: "But Remo, it is for sex."

Remo: "Oh, cool. Go right ahead, you."

Dylan: "Your sudden but inevitable betrayal is going to sting more with every one of these moments where I fall more and more in love with you."

Remo: "Right back atcha, kiddo. I am really going to hate fucking you up, when that eventually happens."

Bradley: "Speaking of daddies, my one was having an affair. With a person named B! I found correspondence. He was making love to a letter of the alphabet!"

Dylan: "We don't know Miss Watson's first name, or Ethan's last name. Odds are 80/20 it's one of those two."

Bradley: "I thought I already went crazy when witnessed him being burned to death, but I think possibly I will now go even crazier still!"

Dylan: "Then I'd better hop to it."

Actually, it's sweet. He grabs her and holds onto her tight and says of course Jerry still loved her, regardless of whatever else he was up to, because who wouldn't? And it's true. Even after all this, I do love ol' Bradley. She's really got it figured out.

I WANNA WAKE UP WHERE YOU ARE

Norma: "Hey Norman, on a scale of one to ten how weird would it be if I slept in here tonight?"

Norman: "In my bed? With my dead animal in it and also me?"

Norma: "One to ten, I said. I mean, I realize it's weird but is it *that* weird?"

Norman: "Ugh, this is just because of that slave-trader who is stalking you and threatened to kill you and managed to get a body out of the morgue without anybody caring."

Norma: "Uh yeah, it is."

Norman: "The truth is, sleeping with you is excellent and it makes me very happy. So if we don't make it weird, it's not weird. Other people maybe would think it's weird, but who cares about other people?"

Norma: "The *true* truth is that I am a grown woman fucking up your teenage mind because I am selfish."

Norman: "Get in here, you old so-and-so. And listen, I'm sorry I truthfully and accurately called you crazy."

Norma: "Please, like my ears can physically even *hear* criticism."

Why don't you slide into my room?

We'll run away, run away, run away

MISS WATSON

Norman: "About my story. I think we should stop editing it and put a halt to my burgeoning literary career."

Miss Watson: "Why, because of your mom? What did she, climb in bed with you last night and steal your breath in your sleep and make you feel like a single blended person and as if you had never left the womb?"

Norman: "Yeah. Plus, if she reads this story it's going to be worse than the time we tried therapy."

Miss Watson: "I was going to say this eventually, so now's fine. *Your mother doesn't need to know what we get up to.*"

Norman: "Uh, that seems like something a teacher should never, ever, ever say to a kid under any circumstances whatsoever."

Miss Watson: "We're the same, Norman. I understand your problems because I have similar problems. You're prone to the occasional anima possession by a negative mother archetype that wants to drown teenage girls and negate all sexuality, while I want to take out my own history of sexual abuse on the most vulnerable person I can find. See? *Simpatico.*"

Norman: "Well, I guess it's not entirely fair to quash my talent just because she..."

Miss Watson: "Your *prodigious* talent. And how's she gonna find out?"

Norman: "Again, that doesn't sound..."

Miss Watson: "Yeah, no. I heard it. I heard it that time."

REAL ESTATE MATT

Matt: "Oh, shit. I forgot Norma Bates again. This will go poorly."

Norma: "I was thinking I would bake cookies! For the Open House!"

Matt: "There's not going to be an Open House, and if there was you'd be serving rape slash murder, not cookies."

Norma: "But if there's not an Open House, then who will smell the cookies? And buy this cursed murder mansion?"

Matt: "I can't get your money back. Not between the highway and your epic bad luck."

Norma: "Then the value. Oahu can't possibly be the most expensive place in the entire universe, oh wait yes it is. Well, just enough for a cottage, then. On Oahu."

Matt: "Baby, it's worth less than it's worth. You're further underwater than a dream of Bradley Martin."

Norma: "I refuse to have that be reality."

But it's the next thing -- "The best thing you can do is to just walk away, let the bank take it back" -- that sends her over the edge. That's how she got the place. That's Keith Summers's mistake, his failure. Not hers. That was the shot, right there, and now Matt is saying, "Let somebody else benefit from your mistake, in turn. Hopefully a man this time." Which is why it does come to pass that she beats the shit out of ol' Matt with her purse.

WHICH IS GREAT

But the next thing that happens is, she is still pissed when Jake Abernathy turns up in her backseat with a gun, causing her, causing everybody, to scream bloody murder.

#9: "Get the present I left on your bed? Apparently you don't take friendly direction too well, so we're escalating."

Norma: "Thank you for the flowers?"

#9: "Zack Shelby owed me \$150,000 from that last batch of girls, and now it's missing. That's what I was looking for on the boat, that's what I've been looking all over for. I talked to everybody else in our sex ring, and they all say it's you."

Norma: "If I had a hundred-fitty grand I would *be in Oahu right now.*"

#9: "Really?"

Norma: "No! Not Oahu. I would never move to Oahu. Ohio, I said."

#9: "I don't care. Come up with the money and bring it to me at the pier at midnight, in next week's episode, entitled 'Midnight.' Or else I will kill your son. Both of them, not just the one you hate. And then I will kill you. Got it?"

Norma: "I guess. Man, today sucks."

NEXT WEEK

Norman brings Emma to the dance, but leaves with Miss Watson. I can't believe it's the finale. What am I going to think and talk incessantly about for the next forty-odd weeks?

Midnight, 110

"Jiao"

PREVIOUSLY

Bradley took Norman's v-card and then got his brother to sneak her into her dad's drug-dealer office, where she learned a mysterious "B" was having an affair with her burned-up dead dad. This is in the previouslies for some reason. More relevant, though, is how Norman very nearly serial killed her for Friendzoning him, which was scary! Over on the mom side, Norma made the acquaintance of the so-called Jake Abernathy, a supercreepy sex-slaving resurrectionist who sent her flowers -- flowers of *murder* -- and will now be extorting from her one hundred and fifty-thousand imaginary dollars.

WPBPD

Norma: "I need to speak to Sheriff Romero right away! It is a matter of life and death!"

Distractingly Beautiful Receptionist: "And what is your name?"

Norma: "Bitch I know you know who I am."

DBR: "Yeah, sorry. I get bored because the cops in this town do not work. You're basically the only person I ever talk to, now that Shelby is dead many times over."

Romero: "Her name is Norma Louise Bates! And she is a pain in my keester!"

Norma: "We need to talk!"

Romero: "Yeah I'm sure. It's been five seconds, so."

Romero: "He wants a hundred-fitty? Where are you going to get it?"

Norma: "Obviously I don't have any money to give him. Even beating the shit out of that real estate bro last week only netted me a couple dozen Dave & Busters tokens."

Romero: "Then I guess we're gonna have to care. Ugh, Norma..."

Norma: "I know! I'm *very inconvenient!*"

Romero: "Okay, just let me handle it."

Norma: "What? Why would I do that?"

Romero: "Because you came here specifically to ask me to do that?"

Norma: "Yeah, when you say it like that it just seems weirdly trusting. Like, do either of us really believe I'm not gonna fuck this up and get us all killed?"

Romero: "Just don't do anything dumb like buy a black-market gun, and we'll be fine."

Norma: "Gotcha."

Norma: "Dylan, could you call me back? I need to acquire a gun immediately."

SCHOOL

Norman: "Staring up at this school dance banner makes you look like a real loser."

Emma: "Yeah, I was just thinking it's good you're a sociopath that won't ask me. I'd hate to get all gussied up. My oxygen tank is already so glam."

Norman: "You should go! Alone, pathetic. Staring with your big beautiful eyes at all the things you'll never have and don't deserve."

Emma: "Or alternately, you could ask me to the dance. The thing a human person would do."

Norman: "I didn't even think of that! Okay, let's do it. It's only charitable."

Emma: "Your words are hurtful, but your adorable delivery makes it seem like flirting."

KITCHEN

Norma: "So here's some French toast, you can taste that I made it with love. Because today, that is what I feel. Don't get used to it. Get me a gun."

Dylan: "Norma, there are a lot of things I would do for just a crumb of your affection. But I feel like it needs to be said that you are ass-crazy, and should not have a gun."

Norma: "Little backstory on that. I am being extorted for a hundred fifty grand by a sex-slaving resurrectionist who is going to kill all of us, starting with Norman and then you."

Dylan: "Maybe I can help in another way. Like some way where you don't end up shooting me, for example, purely out of acting nuts. Like you're doing. Right now."

Norma: "That's exactly what goddamn Romero said."

WHO HAS THE MONEY IS

Romero, of course. I would like that to be because of his non-slavery relationship with Zach -- who did seem to have real affection for Alex, just as he did for Norma -- but also because him being the Third Man doesn't jibe with his conversation with Abernathy at the end of the episode. All we know is that Jake keeps saying, "If you don't have the money, who has it?" and the answer is "A person unrelated to any of this," with of course the caveat that he's related to all of it, being that he is the most worthless sheriff in the history of sheriffing, and is in fact so bad at it that he is the opposite of it.

DR KURATA

Norma bumps into a dude on her way in to secretly see her son's therapist, and the guy's like, "Whatever," and she flips out on him. Sometimes you just gotta scream at a guy on the street, you know? His appalled side-eye in response is so powerful that even Norma is like, "Maybe I should think about getting my shit together. Even just occasionally."

Norma: "I'm here for my appointment! That I didn't make!"

Kurata: "Okay, firstly where is your kid?"

Norma: "He's at school, why?"

Kurata: "Okay. Actually for the record you cancelled last week, and never called to reschedule. So this is not just negligence -- it's actually crazy."

Norma: "Good thing I'm here then, huh? Let's do this."

There's a lake, pure and clean. Surrounded by concrete. Picture it.

Norma: "What I would like is some advice. On how to deal with stress."

Kurata: "What's stressing you out?"

Norma: "*None of your...* I mean, just normal stuff. Things anybody deals with. In normal life. The every day. What was stressing out your last patient? Let's say that."

Kurata: "Well, the major thing I know about you is that you are unhealthy regarding your son Norman..."

Norma: "I have *never noticed that to be true*, Doctor."

Down at the bottom, there's gators. They're angry.

They have every fucking right to be. What kind of a grown woman invites a teenage boy into her house and changes her clothes where he can see her? We're not born manipulative, we're beaten there. Our pain is only ever by demons driven. It makes you no less clean.

Kurata: "Are you going to lose your shit when he leaves?"

Norma: "Leaves what? Where? What have you heard? If that Dylan's been sniffin' around..."

Kurata: "No I mean like, college. Life. Like how people grow up and move away?"

Norma: "Oh yeah, no. We're not doin' that."

Kurata: "Let me ask you this. When you were a little girl, is this what you thought parenting would be like?"

(Clink! You can actually hear her go just a little more crazy.)

Norma: "When I was a little girl? I wasn't one. I mean, I don't remember being one. It's all just mainly a fog until I married Dylan's dad and escaped my house."

Kurata: "What were your parents like? Sometimes in therapy we talk about people's parents. No reason."

Picture a lake, in the center of a world of concrete. Breathe, let it ripple. The cleanest water you've ever seen.

Dad: "My dad was very kind. You know, just like the kind of guy who would smile at you all the time, no matter what... you'd feel like he would just take care of everything."

Mom: "My mom... um, she worked in a bakery? She always smelled like cookies?"

Kurata: "So the truth is the precise opposite of that?"

Norma: "Essentially. Pay no attention to my sudden obsessive scratching at this mystery scar on my leg. It already has more origin stories than Heath Ledger's Joker."

Kurata: "So they're both dead? And you don't know what state any of this took place in? That's perfectly normal. Any sisters? Brothers?"

Norma: "-- So this has been great but I have to *go* now."

Kurata: "*There* it is."

Norma: "Yep! Thanks for adding PTSD to my already very busy crazy-going schedule."

TO DIE FOR

Miss Watson is having a knockdown drag-out with a stalker named Eric, on the phone. You think it's setting up some kind of sex-for-murder scenario -- proving once again that Miss Watson's instincts are pretty stellar in the victim department -- but really it just seems like a way to get Norman off the hook (and of course onto another hook) next season.

Miss Watson: "Why Norman Bates, were you listening to that? I'm so vulnerable! Men, I tell ya. They will control you and hurt you and chain you up in bathrooms and steal your carpet samples... I mean, you have to put up with so much..."

Norman: "Heard it. Listen, I don't want to publish my story about how I'm a serial killer, okay?"

Miss Watson: "Is this about your mom again? Didn't my boobs already explain that?"

Norman: "It's more about how I feel actually crazy, but yeah. She factors in."

Miss Watson: "Guess this means that we have a secret now, huh? You'll keep it for me, won't you?"

Norman: "Yeah, I won't tell anybody about your abusive boyfriend, and you don't tell anybody I wrote a story. That sounds like a solid foundation for you molesting me."

MAGGIE SUMMERS

Looks rough. Not horrible, just... very White Pine Bay. Very "my alcoholic brother pissed away our motel money on Chinese sex slaves and heroin and constant raping."

Maggie: "Why Sherriff, I haven't seen you since we buried just my brother's hand."

Romero: "Lovely service. Maggie, you look rougher than usual. Somebody beat you up?"

Maggie: "I don't know. I am crazy high."

Romero: "Okay, well how about some real talk. I know you did the bookkeeping for your brother and Shelby's little business -- importing girls from Asia and selling them -- and in fact, I've got all your paperwork. So we good?"

Maggie: "Consider me present for this conversation, yes. That was good real talk."

Romero: "So presumably Jake Abernathy did this to you?"

Maggie: "Well, I know him as Joe Fioretti. He wanted some money or something, and I clearly don't have it, so..."

Romero: "And how would I get in touch with him?"

Maggie: "He'd call us, I don't know how to find him. But get this, Alex! He totally has four other ports running the same scam, up and down the coast."

Romero: "That's what I call entrepreneurship."

Maggie: "So are you going to help me or anything? My life is pretty tragic."

Romero: "I'm gonna do some stuff -- crazy bad stuff. You might benefit, who knows."

Maggie: "Welp. That's more than I deserve."

BATES MOTEL

Norma: "Hello, it's Norma Bates. You may remember me from a few minutes ago when I called? Yeah, you too. Listen, about the ongoing patrol Romero promised me weeks ago..."

Emma: "Sorry I'm late to my internship at your crazy-people motel! But I had to get a vintage dress for the dance!"

Norma: "What dance?"

Emma: "The one your son Norman is taking me to!"

Norma: "How can I stop this?"

Emma: "Or we could double down on the weirdness by having you hold up the dress I'll be wearing to your own body. Maybe if we're lucky, Norman will walk in on that happening and just completely unspool."

Emma kneels to investigate a vintage possible-spot, getting right up in Norma's thighs where her big secret scar is. They share a moment about that, because it's dreadful.

Norma: "That is nothing. You did not see it."

Emma: "Oh girl, I am not about to ask you about strange scars on your body. I mean, this is not my first day."

Norma: "It was hot chocolate! In Florida or Ohio or one of those states with frequent hot-chocolate incidents."

Emma: "Yeah, that probably hurt..."

Norma: "I was just a kid. I don't really remember."

Emma: "I'm going to firmly change the subject, if you don't mind."

Norma: "I was two years of age!"

Emma: "Okay, sure. I'm going to hide elsewhere in your house now."

Norma: "Rad, I'm going to run out of the building like I have somewhere to be."

Dylan: "Hey Norma. Changed my mind. Got you a gun. Let's go to the shooting range and see if I can't leverage just a little bit of my position here as your kid."

SHOOTING RANGE

Dylan helps her with her stance and talks her through it, and it's marvelous in exactly the way you're thinking -- him glorying in being good at something, Norma giddy and distracted and happy to not be thinking about her leg, or her Norman, or the million scars thereupon -- and of course he's about two-thirds of the way through his very careful, caring spiel when she fires. So then he gets to yell at her about that and they both enjoy that, too.

Norma: "Okay, okay. Listen, why do you have guns now? All the time, guns. I remember Zach mentioning it, too. And possibly I heard Alex bring it up with the trimmers."

Dylan: "Guarding things. Like a... guardian."

Norma: "Guardian of what?"

Dylan: "Again with this? Obviously pot. It's always going to be pot. Welcome to the WPB."

Norma: "I don't love that."

Dylan: "Here we fucking go..."

She randomly pulls the trigger, I guess to shut him up about it and he points out that this is classic Norma: Acting like the judgy adult, but doing whatever crazy thing she feels like doing at the same time. Her biggest monster and kryptonite: People, men, who don't deserve authority, asserting it anyway.

Dylan: "This is serious shit!"

Norma, still goofy: "Okay, okay. I will follow your instructions. I promise."

Dylan: "Get in the right stance. And then once you have a good aim I want you to *squeeze* the trigger, okay? Don't yank on it, okay, just... gently squeeze it. Okay, Mom?"

She nails it, blowing both their minds. To which I would say two things: Number one, maybe Dylan calling her Mom did open up something in there, some Zen place she needed to hear it. Like she's been saying so long that she doesn't need to hear it, that this became her own inside-out issue and hearing it actually helped.

But also, of course, of everybody on this entire show, the reason I love Dylan the most is that he has actually figured this one out: Doing things gently and correctly. Not overcorrecting one way or the other, or always *reacting* to things, or jumping at shadows and voices in the head. Just gently being present. And I would say that the world is a vampire, but so is his mother. So the only way out for anybody -- all that stuff we talked about week one, about Oedipus and his mother -- is to be gentle, Goldilocks gentle. Not too hard, not too soft.

And if you can do that, then you unlock the next thing, which he is still working on: Not hating your parents, but using them for totems. Because you cannot deny that Norma Louise Bates is a powerful fucking force of nature. The only reason she's screwed is because the world is a dumb awful place: Not because she isn't right about almost everything, not because she hasn't got the willpower of a War Goddess and a saint, but because the world had to break her, to contain her. It's too late for Norma -- we know that; hell, she knows that -- but as her son, as her child, Dylan has access to it.

And if he can hold onto *that*, gently, he really could be the man he wants to be. We act like women are soft and men are hard and that's the end of the story, but that's effects and not causes. The fact is that everything he needs to know about being a man, the world beat into him. And everything he needs to know about being a woman, he's got right here. He just needs to hold it right.

So he puts his arms around her waist and he sights down the barrel with her, and he calls her mom and it connects. For a second, they are the same animal; they are part of the same machine. Those who favor fire. And if she could only feel like this -- if either of them could only feel like this -- without Norman or Ethan, or Remo or anybody else around, they would be superheroes.

Dylan: "Son of a bitch."

Norma: "You called me Mom. You haven't done that in like, I don't know how long."

Dylan: "You've got a loaded gun in your hand, Norma."

She falls into his arms, then, weeping: Adrenaline gone, loud noise gone. The fear back.

Dylan: "I know. But Romero's the man in this town, right? Like, if the bravest thing you can do is the hardest thing... well, in your case that's trusting him. Correct?"

Norma: "Blech."

Dylan, verbatim: "I know that might be hard for you, but that's what you're gonna have to do."

When she runs out of bullets, he helps her reload. Watch it ripple.

BATES MOTEL

Maggie Summers appears out of the drizzle like some horrible drug mule ghost, scaring the crap out of Norma.

Maggie: "My family used to own this place."

Norma: "Nice family you got."

Maggie: "Can I just say something? If you have that money, you need to give it to the guy. Whatever you're calling him. I worked with him and Keith, and he will absolutely kill the shit out of you."

Norma: "Thanks for stopping by the motherfucking Bates Motel."

UP THE HILL

Norman: "Why Bradley, what on earth are you..."

Bradley: "Hi. Is Dylan here?"

Norman: "You're so vulgar!"

Bradley: "No, I'm honest. You should don't know what that looks like."

Norman: "I'll got get him."

I wrote a story that I was your father. Burning from the inside.

After Dylan manages to get Norman to go away -- tenderly, not rudely -- he gives her the box of Jerry's crap from his office and Norman listens behind a door as they awkwardly teen-flirt. Dylan is 22, Bradley is 17 or maybe 18. Which, okay bad Dylan, but Norman and Norma kind of blow that one out the water. And the very Motherness of Norman at this time makes it difficult to even pay attention.

Bradley: "Anyway, it was fun almost getting shot by a hot werewolf with you. I won't bug you anymore..."

Dylan: "Uh, feel free to bug me. My only friend is my mom and this dead guy that used to cry at strip clubs. I feel like we've got a lot in common, you and I. And not in the Miss Watson way."

Norma, proving Dylan's point about her well-regulated militia, is checking out the barrel of the gun -- as in, staring down into the gun like an insane person would do -- when Norman appears, already in sort of *Dexter's Laboratory/Owen Meany* freakout at this point. It's adorable because it's Norman, but also very scary because it's Norman: It's unacceptable to think about him being in pain.

When he screams, she takes that gun she was just pointing at her face and crams it under her mattress, so it looks like a particularly ungainly and ill-advised porn, like Octomom.

Norman: "MOTHER! I NEED BLACK SOCKS!"

Norma: "Did you look in the sock drawer?"

Norman: "I'M NOT RETARDED MOTHER! MOTHERRRR!"

Norma: "Okay so what do I do about that?"

Norman: "MOTHER! MOTHERRRR!"

Norma: "I don't know where your stupid black socks are! It's not my fault you decided to go to a dance at the last minute! What am I supposed to do, *darn some socks*?"

Dylan: "Here are some socks. Love you."

Norman: "UGH DYLAN YOU ARE THE WORST. STOP."

Dylan: "Honey, look at me. I was helping Bradley because her dad died. Okay?"

Norman: "JUST GO AHEAD AND FUCK HER DYLAN. I'M OVER IT."

Dylan: "...Are you sure?"

Norman: "IF I WAS GOING TO KILL HER -- OR YOU -- DON'T YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE DONE IT BY NOW?"

Dylan: "I mean, I just wanna confirm..."

"Yeah, *all* conversations are stupid. Just *Blah blah blah* like rats trying to find our way out through a maze, like it has some purpose or meaning, but it *doesn't*."

Dylan: "Kind of feel like you're being creepy on purpose."

Norman: "I will *always* be creepy about Bradley, but fuck me anyways. Ask her out, shit. I may kill somebody later but don't worry about it. She clearly has a crush on you because you are old and hot and competent and don't smell like formaldehyde, so what."

Somehow watching Norman Bates put on some black socks is like, literally the most moving thing that has ever happened. It took me ten episodes to realize that his physical acting reminds me very much of what we'll provisionally call the love of my life -- an age-appropriate but "gangly"-defining fellow, by any measure -- and that possibly my endearment toward him has been taking place partially on a level I did not know about until this week, but in another way that just confirms it: It's hard enough watching Norman struggle with just being-people activities, I can't be watching him put on socks.

Dylan: "On the off chance that's not a horrible idea, score. Emma's on her way?"

Norman: "Just as soon as Norma puts a goddamn albatross around my dick."

Dylan: "When's it over? Just in case you commit murder and disappear."

Norman: "Right around eponymous midnight, when mom will be dead."

DOWNSTAIRS

Norman: "This is fun waiting for my Last Place Girlfriend, huh? In these socks."

Norma: "Can I tell you something *royally* fucked up that will permanently alter your life? For no other reason than I think I might be murdered, but also because I am bored, but also because I like to ruin your romantic relationships?"

Norman: "Yeah, why would any of that be a problem?"

Norma: "I grew up in Akron Ohio..."

Norman: "That's not one of the versions I..."

Norma: "Shh. I say all kinds of shit but I want somebody to know the truth about me in this world. And I'd like that to be you. If that's okay with you."

Three questions that sound like one question. The last one is, "I've raised you to be okay with hearing this." It has an implied answer. The second one is, "You've turned out to be the one I was waiting for." *I'm gonna lock my son up in a tower / Till I write my whole life story on the back of his big brown eyes.* But the first one, oh. That's not abuse, it's not even sad. It's just true.

They say it a lot of ways, they say "you're only as sick as your secrets" and they say -- I say, usually -- "nothing dishonest is necessary." It's about burning off what doesn't work, but that only helps when you're not speeding into a head-on crash. At the end when they march the guns in or however it happens, when you're up against the wall, so many of these indignities aren't going to matter anymore. You are going to realize that all you wanted was to be known. Tonight's the night she may well die. She's up against the wall.

These indignities don't matter anymore. She had a brother. She was thirteen. Eventually he moved out. Maybe the same difference in age as Dylan and Norman: Maybe she looked at this -- the only beautiful thing that has ever happened in White Pine Bay -- and she wondered.

But if she can hold onto this truth for a second, gently, she can die the mother she wants to be. Hiding nothing. We act like women are soft and men are hard and that's the end. But that's effects, not causes. For a second they are the same animal, she thinks; they are part of the same machine.

"Oh, I know I shouldn't have told you. I shouldn't have told you. It's just, you're the person that I'm closest to in this world."

This is how she remembers it. There is a lake in the center of a world of concrete. At the end of your life, when you look straight down the barrel, you'll pull up from the bottom of the lake the thing that is you. If you have time, you will take the time to dredge.

"My mom was already checked out of her body. My dad was insane, he was so violent... I knew that if I told my dad, he would kill my brother, so I never told. One day... I heard the front door open and it was my dad. And I was so scared that I jumped up, so fast. And the hot iron fell off the ironing board and it hit my leg."

"It was a long time ago. It's just that I want to... I wanted someone to know this about me."

There is a lake in the center of a world of concrete. At the bottom lies the truth about you. At the bottom is why and how you should be loved. What means you should be saved.

It will never, ever be this. It's not what makes you special and it's not what made you strong. Maybe it's your art. Maybe it's your voice. Maybe it's your truth, or your story, or your ability to love. Probably it is your strength. But whatever it is, it's much more important -- and more interesting -- than this.

("You can go home, Norma," he will say.)

There's a lake, in the center of a whole world of concrete. At the bottom is something pure, untouched. Nobody could ever take that away from you.

You were never anything but clean.

DOORBELL

Norma: "Emma, you look beautiful. Norman, you look so handsome. Already ruined. Don't think about doing anything stupid."

Emma will be long gone; will have begged him to find another ride. Miss Watson will appear, like a brother on a motorbike, and take him somewhere warm.

You put up with so much, he'll think. Her words, his head.

Norman will lie in his blood and the rain and hate himself. Dreadfully. For things he can't explain or understand. Things that aren't his fault, but make the water seem so dirty.

Richard Slymore will beat the shit out of him. He won't know the story. He'll just see he's cleaner still; that Bradley is his. Belongs to him, like a house on a hill.

She'll only dance with him so long before she'll see him, staring at Bradley. The story will reverse, again. He'll break her heart, again. Like this one dress smelling of his mother could ever do it. We've all been there.

The song at the dance will go, *Everybody's got a secret to hide / everyone is slipping backwards / I drank the water and I felt all right / I took a pill almost every night...*

DOCKS

Romero: "The thing is, Jake or Joe, we're not dealing with Norma Louise Bates anymore. Now we're dealing with me. If you're running a business in my town..."

#9: "Well. I was."

Romero: "I am the Third Man, now. I'm Keith and I'm Shelby. And we're 50/50."

He'll agree. And Alex will gun him down, where he stands. \$150K safely in its bag.

"You can go home now, Norma."

Didn't he tell her? Didn't he say it would be okay? Her little head will pop up and she'll stare, that crazy-lady stare, and he'll say "When I say *Trust me*, trust me." He'll say it, but he won't really mean it. It will be midnight. We never get free.

THE FUNHOUSE

Miss Watson will make tea and keep saying her questionable things, and when he's sufficiently warm she'll retire to a visible room of her apartment and change, before a mirror. He won't be able to look away and she won't want him to. She won't be in charge; he won't either.

Mother: "What kind of a grown woman invites a teenage boy into her house and changes her clothes where he can see her?"

*Sometimes I get overcharged
That's when you see sparks*

He'll argue, but he'll know. She's right, like she always is. He'll know what he needs to do.

BATES MOTEL

It'll be later. He won't know how much later. He'll run into his mother's arms. She'll hold him, so tightly. Gently, but tightly. They will be alive, parts of the same machine.

"Everything's all right now, Norman. You're home and we're safe. Everything is good. Finally, everything is good. Maybe we should get out of the cold. Let's go build a fire."

We never get free.

THE FUNHOUSE

Miss Watson is dead, throat slashed. Electric light going bzzt, bzzt, bzzt. We won't know who did it, but we can guess. We won't know what she wanted.

But we can guess.

UP THE HILL

But that's not really the point. All of these things are going to happen. All of these things were always going to happen. This life is a freaking cliff-diver that breaks you at best. I don't like it and I don't want to think about it. Even if it's right. I want to think about this:

There was a moment that Norma was free. She thought it would take this, passing her secret to someone else: She confused being seen with having secrets. She confused being wanted with being beautiful, *jiao*, for so long; that somebody can take that away from you. Girls dead in the forest are no less clean than the day they were born; not even Emma understands that yet. If the men understood that, they wouldn't try so hard to hurt, to ruin, to make us dirty. This at least Norma understands. But for a moment, Norma saw the whole truth and it burned like a fire.

There's a placid, clear, beautiful lake. Caged in the center of a world of concrete. It's clean all the way down. And for a second she saw -- Dylan saw, even Norman saw -- just how far down it goes. How clean it is, all the way to the bottom.

Miss Watson is still alive. Emma's heart is not yet broken. Richard Slymore waits in the wings. Miss Watson waits in the wings. Everything is going to be okay.

Everything is a man who burns from the inside, choking on thick black smoke. But if he could breathe, it would be this: Just a peaceful lake, beautiful as our boy. Beautiful as a girl, out in the woods. Only sleeping.

She looks at the bottom and she sees two choices: Alex Romero, dirty though he is, gets her free. Or else she dies and she goes free. After decades of putting up with things, in the world of men, she looks down the barrel and she sees stars. She has one chance to be seen, *known*, by the person she loves the most.

Who knows her best. The best thing she ever did, in her whole shadowed life. Born, made, reared, shaped to carry this. In a world of concrete, one soft thing.

For a moment, she is free. She passes him her secret and she's clean.

Jiao. She always was.